

MAINTAINING THE CONTINUITY OF CHRISTIAN  
MINISTRY AMID EMERGING CULTURAL  
PARADIGM SHIFTS

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**ABSTRACT**

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This ministry model centers on acknowledging and implementing popular Post-modern cultural trends as a means to fulfill the Great Commission. The integration of Post-modern cultural trends or technology will serve as an example. Herein, this venture will endeavor to incorporate primarily technological tools utilized by popular culture or social media into a context of ministry, which heretofore has not utilized such for Christian witnessing and discipleship. The aim of this effort is to provide a practical transitional paradigm for integrating transcending trends into church ministries by utilizing sermonic presentations and biblical teaching for the purpose of maintaining relevant Christian ministry.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

In the course of this effort and its adjoining journey there have been a number of individuals who have in one way or another provided essential support and encouragement along the way; and there are a few of which whom I need to acknowledge. First, I would like to thank my mentors Dr. William Curtis and Dr. Gina Stewart, their commitment to scholarship and excellence served as a great inspiration along the way. Along this line, I have to thank the entire focus group of Curtis-Stewart Fellows and in particular, my peer associate Pastor Kevin Taylor who personified how iron sharpens iron.

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Third, if it were not for the United Baptist Church family and their support this endeavor would have been nil. I am so grateful for God placing me within a context and a family of faith that permitted me to pastor and to grow as a pastor. Thank you officers and members of United, as far as church families go: you are the best!

To my parents who planted the first seed of God's reality in me and who have unconditionally loved me throughout the course of my life; to Merion and Charlotte Solomon, you have been a driving force, which gave me a reason to pursue and

accomplish things which I hoped would make you proud. This is only a part of a perpetual effort on my part to show you my thanks for all you have done for me.

And to Sierra, my beautiful daughter there are no words that can fully express the joy and the inspiration you are to me. My doctoral work is one thing, but being your dad is the greatest thing I have ever been afforded. I am forever grateful for the gift you have been, and I pray that this work that I have done would serve as a source of encouragement to you, whereby you too would follow and fulfill your dreams.



## INTRODUCTION

The span of Jesus' earthly ministry has garnered attention far beyond the years of in which he dedicated his life to the development of his disciples; and his death, burial and resurrection. Millenniums indeed have succeeded the days which mark his ministry as noted through the scriptures. And although the scriptures bear record of the immutability of Jesus Christ in spite of the passing of time (Heb13:8) the world in which he walked upon and the cultures in which he walked among has certainly been challenged and in fact changed through biblical interpretation, religious praxis, bias and prerogative expressed through varied forms of Christian faith over the years. From the Divine Right of Kings to the Reformation of Martin Luther to the Baptist Bishops and numerous newly founded reformations of the 21st century, Christianity has a history of evolving concurrently with popular culture. Moreover, with the onset of technology and its impact upon society and the extreme pace of change it prods society to make alongside it, those of the Christian faith are presented with the task of presenting the gospel message with relevance; and to do so, while what is relevant becomes dated so quickly in this ever-evolving technological age.

The church of today is still charged by the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Mt 28:18-20) and as such the pastor, church leaders, and the laity must make the necessary adjustments, to include the methodologies of popular culture, for the express purpose of being witnesses of Christ and making disciples. It is essential to incorporate

the trends of society as tools of the kingdom so that the message of Jesus Christ is received by popular culture due to it being packaged in relevance. The message of Christ must be something the hearer must relate with/to. After all, Jesus, himself is the epitome of this approach, for he is the Word made flesh, just so that humanity could identify with the God of their redemption. The incomprehensible God had become comprehensible through Jesus Christ, the Imago Dei, the visible image of the invisible God. And the church of today must likewise utilize methods, which make the incomprehensible God, comprehensible.

The United Baptist Church of East Baltimore, the context for this project, has assisted in developing a model for churches endeavoring to fulfill the Great Commission. This model is for pastors, leaders, and congregations that particularly want to do so with integrity to the gospel, while cultural paradigms emerge and shift generational interests. Herein, this work offers the following chapters that stems from and concludes supporting the hypothesis: If popular cultural trends as a ministry methodology are observed, adopted and integrated in the life of the church, the continuity of Christian ministry will allow the essence of the Great Commission to be fulfilled in today's culture.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, presents several propositions: a) that which is purposeful and popular in society can be purposeful in producing for the kingdom; b) the church must endeavor to connect to people through that which is culturally relevant; and c) what is culturally relevant is also categorically, generationally relevant. These propositions lead to the assertion that the church needs to be relevant over and above being religious.

Chapter two, The State Of The Art Of This Ministry Project, addresses the slow historical adjustments the church has made in regards to remaining relevant to culture, the biblical argument that there is no ministry success without a successor, particularly from a succeeding generation, and how present trends must become a part of the church's methodology of ministry.

Chapter three, Theoretical Foundation, is the historical and theological underpinning of the inevitability of cultural evolution. Moreover, this chapter shares with the reader the biblical foundation (Mk 14:3-9) to support that what is intended for a worldly purpose can in fact be used for the witness and work of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Four, Methodology, shares the methodology of the project. In this chapter the reader will become acquainted with the approach to address the hypothesis and have a template to follow should the desire be to replicate this project.

Chapter Five, Field Experience, will give the reader a cursory look at the overall project, to include: the projects context and problem being addressed, the purpose and objectives of the project, the collection of data, the analysis of the data, and the major findings in relationship to the data.

Chapter Six, Summary, Reflections, And Conclusions, is an overall evaluation of the project. This chapter shares the conclusions made from the research and recommendations regarding future endeavors in this area of focus, namely, the continuity of the Christian ministry amid emerging cultural paradigm shifts.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

The focus of this project is to introduce innovative methodologies based upon trends, which transcend culture; and to integrate these trends as a ministry approach by the church (the ecclesia) to utilize as a means to fulfill the Great Commission.<sup>1</sup> Herein, this endeavor will attempt to ensure that the church remains relevant with her witnessing and discipleship strategies while maintaining the integrity of the gospel message and the intentions of the Christian mission.

There are a couple of prepositions relative to this project. The first preposition presented is how essential the understanding of that which is existentially purposeful and popular within society in general, can in fact be productive for the kingdom of God. To this end, everything that is worldly so to speak should not be arbitrarily avoided nor considered to have no place within the church. Just because the popularity of a trend has been noted outside of the Christian community and outside of the church culture by a culture other than Christian, which does not share the churches beliefs and praxis, does not mean that the church cannot incorporate the same trend(s) as a means to be relevant in order to win that otherwise culture to Christ. After all, the Great Commission expressly calls the believer to go and make disciples of all nations. Moreover, the apostle Paul

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<sup>1</sup>Mt 28:18-20.

shares the necessity of being adaptive for the sake of being an effective witness as he testifies,

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.<sup>2</sup>

The focus cannot be worldly per se, but relevance. The truth is the Christian faith is fundamentally established upon theological and Christological relevance more so than a religion or religious practice. Jesus, himself, is the epitome of an adaptive methodology for the purpose of establishing not only a relationship between God and humankind, but by doing so by making God relevant through his very existence. This claim is made giving consideration to John's gospel and his presentation of who Jesus is at the outset of the Johannine work. He shares that the Word (Logos) in the beginning was with God and is said to be, according to John: God. Moreover, he writes that the Word (Logos) became flesh and made his dwelling among men, which by all accounts is referring to Jesus—the transitional manifested form of the Word (Logos).<sup>3</sup> Paul offers further support stating that Jesus is the “visible image of the invisible God.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, according to Matthew, Jesus is also recognized as Immanuel, which is by interpretation, “God with us.”<sup>5</sup> Lastly for the sake of argument, Hebrews 12:2 adds to this apologetic directing that Jesus' life should

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<sup>2</sup>1 Cor 19-23.

<sup>3</sup>1 Col 1:14.

<sup>4</sup>1 Col 1:15.

<sup>5</sup>Mt 1:23.

be examined because he is the author and perfecter of faith.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the life and work of Jesus are examples of faith for the purpose of people discovering God, declaring, and developing their faith in God. Who can argue that this is not the greatest adjustment and adaption ever made in all of history with the intent to cause individuals to form a relationship with God? How more relevant can one become than that which is represented in the Word (Logos) taking on the form of man?<sup>7</sup> From heaven to earth, from Word to flesh, from Spirit to body, from God to man: Jesus is the epitome of necessary transitioning for the cause of kingdom relationships and kingdom growth. All the same, he is the prime mover behind the Christian faith as it is practiced in post-modernity. Subsequently, the church represents the proverbial and practical body of Christ in both the post-Calvary age and in the post-modern world. And as such, the church should make adjustments and adaptations in kind to the ministry methods she incorporates for the sake of forming relationships between man and God just as the very Lord she serves has manifested through his very existence.

The second preposition is that the church has to endeavor to connect through that which is culturally relevant. As Jesus taught, he on occasion used parables to convey his message: anecdotes, which his audience could draw a correlation to due to the cultural relevance of his analogies and metaphors. Every gospel writer captures this pedagogical practice of the Lord. Whether it was Jesus' story of the farmer who sowed seed or his analogy of a shepherd who lost one sheep out of the ninety-nine which were under his care; or the Lord's creative account of a man persistently begging his neighbor for help at

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<sup>6</sup>Heb 12:2.

<sup>7</sup>Phil 2:7-8.

the hour of midnight: you name it, and clearly Jesus mastered teaching by remaining relevant to his audience through his use of the parable.

The parable serves as another significant adaptation for the purpose of relevance. For Jesus it was his technique and tool to enlighten his audience about the kingdom of heaven. Through this unique teaching method Jesus conveyed information concerning the vast invisible and infinite reality—what Moltmann distinguished as the space of God from the created space of the world<sup>8</sup> and what Kirk-Duggan referred to as "the invisible mysterious sphere of God's rule."<sup>9</sup> Jesus conveyed this reality through the use of tangible and temporal cultural examples. It is important to note as Tillich states, "no method can be developed without prior knowledge of the object to which it is applied."<sup>10</sup> This suggests how imperative pre-existing knowledge is in order for the correlation approach to be effective. Philosophy Professor Garth Kemmering writes,

Given the basic definition of knowledge as perception of the agreement of our ideas, it follows that we fall short of knowing whenever we lack ideas or fail to perceive their agreement. Thus, intuition extends only to the identity and diversity of ideas we already have; demonstration extends only to ideas between which we are able to discover intermediaries; and sensitive knowledge informs us only of the present existence of causes for our sensory ideas.<sup>11</sup>

While the parabolic pedagogical method is used for the purpose of establishing understanding, it also relies on a priori knowledge whether cognitive or intuitive on the part of the individual whom the analogy is used. Herein, the receiver of the parable only benefits if he or she can relate to the subject that is used to enlighten on the subject that is

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<sup>8</sup>Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, *Handbook of Christian Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 458.

<sup>9</sup>*Eerdman's Dictionary of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing), 564.

<sup>10</sup>*The Christian Theology Reader* (John Wiley and Sons, 2011), 26.

<sup>11</sup>Garth Kemmering, "A Guide To Locke's Essay, The Limitations Of Knowledge." Last modified November 12, 20011, accessed January 29, 2014<http://www.philosophy pages. com/ locke/g05.htm>.

being taught. To further this point, Romans 10:9 says, "Faith comes by hearing the message." Given this cursory portion of the passage the importance of the messages' relevance cannot be underscored enough since it is inferred that faith in God relies heavily upon the hearer(s) ability to connect with and comprehend the message. Hence, the message must in turn be a relevant message. And relevance requires experience, prior knowledge, indeed, a sense of familiarity.

The third proposition is culturally, familiarity extends beyond the music, literature, architecture, dress, etc. that are relative to an area on the globe and an era in time; it is also established generationally as well. Best and Kellner share in their work

*Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*

Yet theories of subjectivity and political agency must be mediated with theories of intersubjectivity which stress the ways that the subject is a social construct and the ways that sociality can constrict or enable individual subjectivity.. In addition, an adequate theory of subjectivity should stress the ways the social construction of the subject, its production in discourses, practices, and institutions.<sup>12</sup>

Bouchard cites H. Richard Niebuhr defining culture as "the artificial, secondary environment which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises languages, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organizations, inherited artifacts, technical processes and values."<sup>13</sup> Bearing in mind the aforementioned definition, generations based upon their distinctions for which the line of demarcations are noted by habits, ideas, customs, social organizations and the like, establish a culture that is uniquely generational. Thus generations have identifiable subjects of relevance respective to and reflective of the generational timeframe.

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<sup>12</sup>Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory Critical Interrogations* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 1991), 284.

<sup>13</sup>Musser, Price *New Handbook of Christian Theology*, 115.



Dr. James White, pastor of the Mecklenburg Community Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, offers through his work *Rethinking The Church* that evangelism involves effectively communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ with the goal of converting the individual to the Christian faith. Along these lines White says although the gospel is unchanging, the method of communicating the gospel must change according to the language, culture, and background of the audience. Moreover, he adds that rethinking evangelism needs to begin with rethinking that the listeners are.<sup>14</sup> To this end, with the proposition generations have their era of unique cultural formation; it becomes necessary that adaptations be made to heretofore ministry approaches in order to effectively communicate the gospel generationally.

With consideration to the propositions mentioned, the focus of this project will address relevance more so generationally. With that said, it becomes essential to understand that post-modernity covers a number of generations regardless of the uncertainty and exactness of the year in which postmodernity became categorically known as a historical era. Nonetheless, the period itself has a host of generations along with their respected and distinctive cultures that range from The Silent Generation of the 20th century to The New Silent Generation of the 21st century.

Those who were born during the years of the Great Depression, and World War II, or years ranging from 1925 to 1942 represent the Silent Generation. Those of this generation were born during significant periods of change as well as challenge in America. Farms and factories became a way of life and generated livelihoods for many; and consequently this gave rise to a generation who lived through a time of American

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<sup>14</sup>James Emery White, *Rethinking The Church: A Challenge To Creative Redesign In An Age Of Transition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bakers Books, 1997), 38-39.

history whereas they were born within a window of time prior to problematic periods. As a result, those of this generation forged character, produced goods, persevered through difficulties, and proved what ingenuity can come by way of a survival instinct.

Some nearly nine decades later has arisen The New Silent Generation. Although the nomenclature is somewhat similar, the cultural differences are extreme; and rightfully so, after all, times have certainly changed in ninety years. The 21st century presents a world unlike that of the century it followed. Culturally the Industrial Age of the previous millennium has given way to the Information Age in the present millennium. The pace of productivity of consumer goods as well as the speed and reach of communication has exponentially exceeded that of times ninety-years ago; and as a result an undeniable cultural shift occurred. With new and advancing technology would come a kind of lifeline for new generations, this innovation is known, as the Internet and it has become a way of life for many. Researcher, George Barna claims no single innovation has changed the American way of life more dramatically than the Internet and nothing has altered the landscape of our lives than the Internet in the past century.<sup>15</sup>

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has covered both being socially significant and culturally connected by way of the Internet and social media. Joel claims we are intrinsically connected through technology, the Internet, and our mobile devices. According to Barna, the Internet is now considered the most essential medium in our society. In fact, so much so that a new community/culture has come into being: the cyber-community.<sup>16</sup> The Internet is where people connect and socialize now around the clock. Pop culture

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<sup>15</sup>George Barna, *Future Cast: What Today's Trends Mean For Tomorrow's World* (Austin, TX: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2011), 93.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

theologian Thomas Beaudoin infers that the Internet now serves as a communal center the common gathering venue albeit, cyberly.<sup>17</sup> Clearly this modern technological tool and its social media medium had changed the manner in which we associate and communicate. Indeed, even the business world has noted the potential benefit according to the Kelley School of Business as it reports, "Decision makers, as well as consultants, try to identify ways in which firms can make profitable use of applications such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, Second Life, and Twitter."<sup>18</sup> Just as the business world is seeking to stay in stride with this trend, so too should the church; not just for business sake: but as ministry for the sake of kingdom business. This is an opportunity that the church cannot ignore. The technological tools of social media that are used frequently in society in general e.g., Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to name a few should be utilized just as well within the church as a means of Christian ministry fulfilling the Great Commission. To be sure, consideration needs to be given to these mediums of connectivity, if no more but for the purpose of reaching, witnessing, and winning people to a faith in Jesus Christ and citizenship in the kingdom of God for whom these mediums of connection are relevant aspects of their everyday life.

It is with this in mind, that I will endeavor to integrate technological trends as a ministry effort expressly for the purposes of encouraging ministry relevance across generations. While the social connection via the Internet is unequivocally a given and it is growing each day by way of numerous streams, the soteriological and missiological

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<sup>17</sup>Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith. The Irreverent Spiritual Quest Of Generation X* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

<sup>18</sup>Andreas M. Kaplan, Michael Haenlein, "Users of the World, Unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media" Kelley School Of Business. Indiana University. Abstract Business Horizon 2010, accessed March 16, 2013, <http://www.slideshow.net/mobile/escpexchange/kaplan-haenlein-users-of-the-world-unite-the-challenges-and-opportunities-of-social-media>.

benefits are still being experimented with and explored. And in my current context, the benefit of a virtual church experience has yet to be really entertained. To this end, this project will focus on educating and encouraging those of my ministry context in the use of technological trends such as the Internet and social media applications as a means to honor the Lord's Great Commission. The salvation of souls and the discipleship of believers as a result of integrating and incorporating Social media applications as Christian ministry will be the overall objective. Herein, I anticipate meaningful and substantial Christian ministry through microblogging the gospel message that is preached and taught albeit in real time or upon reflection by those who take part in this project. Furthermore, through the utilization of popular social media streams I am hopeful that the message of Jesus Christ will be passed on and the encouragement of Christian faith and fellowship will take place.

As the church endeavors to be relevant over and above religious she will honor the Great Commission in a more effective manner. And as a result the body of Christ will grow, the kingdom of God will be greater represented, and God will receive glory through the church as divinely intended.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

From the outset of the Bible readers are presented with the story of creation. It is there in the early chapters of the book of Genesis where the concept of creation ex nihilo is introduced. Moreover, through this ancient work amid the creation account, evolution is concurrently underway as well i.e., the systematic fashion, which the stages of creation take place. While the reader of this work and this creation account is informed of the beginnings such as that of the heavens and the earth and the subsequent kairoitic six days of development ex nihilo of existing things, creatures, and beings; the account itself reveals paradigmatically “time and the world do not stand still.”<sup>1</sup> Whether the world took six days or six million years in its creation process, it began creation ex nihilo and at some point yielded to a procreative evolutionary continuum. The renowned 19th century preacher and prolific writer Charles Spurgeon offers,

We do not know how remote the period of the creation of this globe may be—certainly many millions of years before the time of Adam. Our planet has passed through various stages of existence, and different kinds of creatures have lived on its surface, all of which have been fashioned by God.<sup>2</sup>

According to the scriptures and the likes of Charles Spurgeon, God is credited with the creation and the beginning of all things. To allow this theory unequivocal

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<sup>1</sup>President John F Kennedy, Address In The Assembly Hall at the Paulskirche, Frankfurt June 25, 1963.

<sup>2</sup>Old Earth Ministries, “Charles Spurgeon and the Ages of the Earth” Spurgeon, accessed June 2012, <http://www.oldearth.org/spurgeon/spurgeon.htm>.

consideration will fundamentally underscore the systemic progression not just of creation, but also of culture. Indeed, our world has not stood still since its existence. Humankind has insured its advancement through inventions intended to improve its society. Whether it was the first fire to prepare a meal or the first means of mass communication, the human beings' level of intelligence and longing for better has set forth trends that ultimately change the course of day-to-day life and indeed history itself. Dr. Richard Hall in his publication, *William James On The Humanities* cites the renowned late 19th century philosopher James stating, "Mankind does nothing save through initiatives on the part of inventors, great or small, and imitation by the rest of us. Individuals show the way, set the patterns. The rivalry of the patterns is the history of the world."<sup>3</sup> Herein, it can be asserted that history turns on the trends, which surface and find their way into the stream of society; that is until an ensuing idea and subsequent invention comes into play.

The church juxtaposed historically with popular culture has typically maintained somewhat of a recalcitrant mindset to change. In his article "Can the Catholic Church Change," Michael Leach notes the onset of the Reformation in 1517 and the 500 years span before discussions for new reform were entertained. He cited a total of 476 theologians from numerous countries were demanding for reform claiming the need for ongoing reform discussion. Notwithstanding, Leach also indicates the church has changed but more so in the last fifty years than in the 2,000 years since her inception. This is progression, but extremely delayed progress. For years the Catholic Church has

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<sup>3</sup>Richard Hall, "William James On The Humanities" William James Studies 2012 Vol. 9, 120-145 accessed March 3, 2013, <http://williamjamesstudies.org/9.1/hall1.pdf>.

by rule maintained the requirement for celibacy of the priesthood, and the exclusivity to male-gendered priest; for years the church held a position against birth control; and for years Catholics by rituals were unmoved in their traditions such as being restricted from eating meat on Friday; however, as times and culture has changed, so has the church either changed her position or at the least is entertaining the discussions about the need to change.<sup>4</sup>

Leach states, "The church has changed. It is changing. It will change." Moreover, he acknowledges the need to change drawing the analogy, "Today's cell phone is tomorrow's telegraph."<sup>5</sup> James Emery White would agree in the need for the church to change but perhaps would add to be more speedily with her modifications. In his work *Rethinking Church*, White addresses that the church is in the age of transition and therefore must creatively redesign her approach. He stresses the church cannot rely on what her history is, but must consider what her future will be and make the necessary paradigm shifts in order to not only survive but succeed. Citing when Switzerland was dominant in watch making and in a sense cornered the watch market by 1968 White notes as well that the Swiss lack of foresight and flexibility within the industry cost them greatly. Because they were not willing to make little changes, other watch companies, which did, gained an advantage. Accordingly there is a fitting moral as White concludes,

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<sup>4</sup>Michael Leach, Can the Catholic Church Change, posted 3/30/11 [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-leach/can-the-catholic-church-c\\_b\\_841971.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-leach/can-the-catholic-church-c_b_841971.html).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

“A past that was so secure, so profitable, so dominant was destroyed by an unwillingness to consider the future.”<sup>6</sup>

Future thinking is a countermeasure effort to extinction. Such a proactive mindset as future thinking is quite theological as well, as it is reflected in theological determinism and/or, if you will, biblical consistency. Biblical consistency presents through covenantal and prophetic claims, notwithstanding, eschatological revelation that: God, Who although is as Augustine and Aquinas understood to be as infinite, timeless, atemporal, and eternal<sup>7</sup>, also considers the future of finite man. By way of the chronicled interaction between God and humankind as presented within the Bible, reach has been done on the aforementioned conclusion as well. Herein, the scriptures, which underpin theological views, provide the readers thereof a divine planning for a, what is to come motif.

For expert researcher George Barna, the importance of future thinking cannot be considered fully without noting the importance of marking trends. In his work *Future Cast* Barna claims,

The reason we bother to track trends is different from what many people might think. The purpose is not to predict the future, for such proclamations are often terribly off the mark and create hardships for those who put their trust in the projections. The true value of trend watching is to see the possibilities for the future and discern how to shape that future.<sup>8</sup>

To this end, according to Barna, there is relationship with and reliance upon trends from culture for the purpose of forming cultures to come—cultures which are unborn and therefore unknown yet; nevertheless, they are inevitable and certain to undo

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<sup>6</sup>James Emery White, *Rethinking The Church: A Challenge To Creative Redesign In An Age Of Transition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bakers Books, 1997), 20.

<sup>7</sup>Gregory Ganssle, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *God And Time*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/god-time/#SH1b>.

<sup>8</sup>George Barna, *Future Cast: What Today's Trends Mean For Tomorrow's World* (Austin, TX: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2011), ix.



traditions that are already in place: such would reinforce Barna's claim of trends shaping the future.

Just as future thinking is a countermeasure to extinction, trends—although they may in and of themselves commence and conform to traditions—they are initially introduced as countermeasures to what is traditional, ergo, *Webster's New World Dictionary* definition of the word trendy which is: of or in the latest style.<sup>9</sup> Trends represent a change of style. Trends are a reshaping of what was. Indeed, trends are the introduction of that which is new. Herein, trends may be problematic for the church, which historically has been and sociologically and theologically may be unreceptive to a change of style, a reshaping of what was, not to mention, the introduction of anything that is new. The Catholic Church for example as previously mentioned did not readily welcome change. And Protestant churches even though reflect the change in faith and practice through their historical break from Catholicism, are not fluid enough with changes within their own and rank and file of religious traditions to garner a sustaining appeal to the postmodern culture.

The number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public—and a third of adults under thirty—are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>*Webster's New World Dictionary*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 673.

<sup>10</sup>Pew Research Religion And Public life Project, "Nones On The Rise" [http://www. Pew forum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/](http://www.Pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/).

According to the Landscape Survey one in four Americans between eighteen and twenty-nine were either unaffiliated or have ceased to have any committed relationship with a religious tradition of any sort.<sup>11</sup> The above-cited Landscape Survey and Pew Research polling have a variation of five years between them, with the Pew Research findings being the latter. That said: there has been a fall off within American culture's religious connections.

The Landscape Survey confirms that the United States is on the verge of becoming a minority Protestant country; the number of Americans who report that they are members of Protestant denominations now stands at barely 51%.<sup>12</sup> This decline in religious association is across the board. And with America steadily moving away from a majority Protestant religiously affiliated nation, the inference of the Protestant church not sustaining growth and/or steadily growing is substantiated.

Since Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses upon the door of the Wittenberg Church and the ensuing inception of Protestantism, religious practice as Protestants has certainly not remained wedded to its original structure and mores. As a result, Protestantism has morphed into many subsets of denominations as stated in the Landscape Survey e.g., "Protestant population is characterized by significant internal diversity and fragmentation, encompassing hundreds of different denominations."<sup>13</sup> The varying denominations of Protestantism have in turn continued to stretch the Protestant community into more subsets especially among a number of historically African American Baptist churches.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

This is noted with the onset of the episcopacy within the Black Baptist Church population i.e., the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship, which may be responsible for spawning the recent inspiration to the forming of other Baptist Episcopal reformations across the country since its inception in 1993. Notwithstanding, Christendom has unquestionably evolved from its biblically reported genesis starting with the Great Commission on through the Great Schism, the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, Protestantism, Baptist Reformations and most recently the Internet Church e.g. lifechurch.tv and the miracleinternetchurch.com, to list a couple cyber-church venues.

The church has physically and culturally traveled a great deal over the years and appears to reflect the original charge given to the disciples by Jesus Christ in Acts 1:8 “And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” by doing so. Nowadays, it can be said that the church has gone national and international through the use of the Internet. Indeed, the institutional church has become the Internet church in some form or fashion for post-moderns. Even a renowned mega ministry such as the Potters House of Dallas, Texas whom is ranked within the top twenty largest and fastest growing churches in America,<sup>14</sup> although having well-attended multiple locations has also a dedicated Internet church to extend its reach. What was started with a charge by Christ to his disciples just prior his ascension, and what was birthed in Jerusalem over 2,000 years ago; has become a global witness of Jesus through modern technology.

It is unequivocal: times have changed and the church has changed with the times. This change is noted both spatially and by way of the speed of the change itself. No

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<sup>14</sup>Outreach Magazine, America's Fastest-Growing and Largest Outreach 100 Churches, 2013 <http://www.outreachmagazine.com/2013-outreach-100-largest-churches-america.html>.

longer is the Christian Church in one general locale; nor is the church changing at the slow pace of 500-year intervals; neither is the church in a standstill awaiting theological protests to expedite change. The Internet and technology and the culture in which they have fostered have forced the culture of the church to consider the use of technology in the extension of her reach and in addition for the purpose of maintaining cultural relevance. In his work *Postmodern Pilgrims*, Leonard Sweet endorses the use of technology and cautions the very lack of such a consideration.

Unless churches can transition their cultures into more EPIC—Experiential, Participatory, Imaged-based, and Connected—they stand the real risk of becoming museum churches, nostalgic testimonies to a culture that is no more.<sup>15</sup>

Sweet and I share a similar concern. Given my spiritual autobiography and ministry context and the synergy thereof there is a foreboding relative to the future of the church which does not address and adapt to the eminent and/or emerging cultural changes surrounding it. For this cause the state of the art of this ministry project is an effort to avoid churches becoming museum churches and nostalgic testimonies to a culture that is no more.<sup>16</sup> Theoretically, the traditional church must consider the trends within culture in order to remain relevant and effective. Biblically the aforementioned thesis is theologically underpinned through the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the parabolic ministry of Christ; the ministry to Christ by the woman who broke her alabaster box for his sake, and the evangelistic testimony of Paul, to name a few examples. Beginning with the latter the apostle Paul states,

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's

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<sup>15</sup>Leonard Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishers, 2000), 30.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.<sup>17</sup>

The apostle clearly adapts his evangelistic approach according to the culture at hand. Paul addresses in his testimony how his ministry perspective and practice was such that required the need to remove himself from the rigidity of the traditional religious praxis of his upbringing.

The woman who had an alabaster box or jar as noted in the synoptic gospels (Mt 26:6-13, Lk 7:36-50, Mk 14:1-11) uses her container of perfume to anoint Jesus. Although the perfume existentially was made for the purpose of being an exclusive and expensive fragrance, the woman of the narrative uses it for another purpose: to anoint Jesus. Meanwhile, her onlookers took great exception to her actions, failing to see the true benefit of her deed. However, Jesus takes her side as she stands in the minority at the moment. He recognizes that she has altered the intended use of the perfume and has used it instead as a form of ministry to him. It also needs to be noted that she ministers through her perfume, in the present, for the sake of what was to come in the future. Jesus mentions in her defense that what she did she done in preparation of his burial, which was to come. Herein, a paradigm is set forth: ministry is centered on a Jesus motive; one whereas what is done in the present should bear in mind what is 1) to come from it; and 2) what is to come in general.

The parables of Jesus illustrate a pedagogical methodology, which incorporates the usage of similes that draw from relevant cultural examples. As Jesus taught using parables he presented anecdotes that his audience could readily identify with e.g., shepherds, famers, wedding banquets, etc. In each case it was essential for his listeners to

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<sup>17</sup>1Cor 9:19-22 (NIV).

be able to draw a correlation from that which was culturally relevant to them. This teaching method teaches that the present culture cannot be ignored for the sake of maintaining institutional practices. As Jesus' teaching is noted in scripture as being different from what was traditionally shared in the synagogue, it can be deduced that his pedagogical method was not that which was representative of the traditional, institutional teaching method of his times. To this end, although his parables and interpretation of the Law and so forth were unconventional, he sets forth a paradigm to which present culture and present cultural examples should be and must be incorporated with intention for the purpose of ministry maintaining relevance, and even greater still the mission of Christ.

One needs to look no further than the Incarnation of Jesus Christ to discover the epitome of relevant ministry. Indeed, the Gospel of John reveals the ultimate adaption for the purpose of ministry and ministry relevance: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."<sup>18</sup> Jesus' hypostatic union reflects the ultimate in relevant ministry in that the Holy became human for the express purpose of leading humanity by example. The writer of Hebrews expresses in part the *raison d'être* of Christ stating in Hebrews 12:2 "Let us keep looking to Jesus. Our faith comes from Him and He is the One who makes it perfect."<sup>19</sup> Jesus is our living paradigm, and as such, we are to look at him, examine his life, and learn from him. This is discipleship, which is the foremost ministry of Christ: making disciples. Herein, the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ, as it takes its lead from Christ, Himself, needs to become more relevant than religious.

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<sup>18</sup>Jn 1:14 (NIV)

<sup>19</sup>Heb12:2 (New Life Translation).

Author and church consultant, Reggie McNeal suggest the church should represent a new reformation stating, “The first Reformation was about freeing the church. The new Reformation is about freeing God’s people from the church (the institution).”<sup>20</sup> This project will endeavor to bridge the church that has become complacent in her unique practice of faith by way of traditions which she has honored either from times past or from generations who deemed the traditions acceptable—to the culture of the present by utilizing present trends as a means and a ministry tool for furthering the discipleship of Jesus Christ. Relevant ministry is generation-focused ministry to which trends, generations share a unique relationship, and therefore this relationship must be given the utmost consideration by the church. For instance, generations have been categorically labeled e.g. the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomers, and Generations X, Y, and Z; and each of these generations are known primarily by the cultural distinctions of their era. To this end, post-modernity spans each of these generations, which means ministry approaches do not need to be broad-brushed applications addressing the Post-modern, but fine-brushed applications that intentionally consider past, present, and future cultures i.e., generations within the church.

Most importantly, the present church culture should be, at the very least, multi-generation-cultural in her ministry methodology, serving this present age, but also modifying her ministry to address the generation, which will follow. Successful ministry is ministry that is perpetuated; it is a ministry with continuity of the gospel and continued growth in discipleship from generation to generation: in short, it is a ministry that

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<sup>20</sup>Reggie McNeal, *This Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishing, 2001), 43.

succeeds because it has successors. The Bible is consistent with this paradigm. Consider the following:

#### Moses - Joshua

The book of Exodus introduces the protagonist of Israel's liberation from Egypt: Moses. And as such, the reader of this work follows Moses from the point of his calling and deployment taken place at the moment he encountered Yahweh from within the burning bush to the very day of Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh and their taskmasters. Moses however—given the comprehensive writings of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—only carries out one portion of Yahweh's promise noted in Exodus 3:7-10, and that is guiding the children of Israel out of Egypt.

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

The 34th and final chapter of Deuteronomy shares with its reader the death of Moses at Mount Nebo (Dt 34:4-7). It clearly states Moses dies before the children of Israel enter the land that was promised to them in Exodus 3:8. Moses' death though does not negate what the Lord has promised. The book of Joshua herein affirms this. While Deuteronomy ends with Moses' death, the book of Joshua opens first reminding its reader of Moses' passing and then quickly segues to Joshua: Moses's successor. In Joshua 1:2 Joshua is called to continue the work that God began in Moses and to lead the people of Israel into Canaan. The writer of Joshua chronicles the journey of the children of Israel as they continue onward into the fulfillment of Yahweh's claim noted on the aforementioned Exodus 3:8. Joshua is Moses' successor and as such the children of God continue onward.



### Elijah - Elisha

The Bible is replete with individuals who were distinguished as prophets. One such individual who has a renowned reputation is Elijah. A 9th century prophet who exhibited incomparable assurance in Yahweh and tremendous integrity regarding his covenant relationship with the Lord, Elijah passes the baton e.g., his mantle or anointing to an eager young follower named Elisha. In 2 Kings 2:1-15 Elijah's last days are recorded. The Lord notes his death as an appointed moment. While Elijah was on his way to Gilgal, Elisha joined him. The two would travel a circuitous and inseparable journey, one that would become a paradigm of faithful discipleship. Elisha desired a double anointing<sup>21</sup> of the leading prophet, however according to Elijah such a request would only be granted provided if Elisha would be present when the Lord took Elijah away.<sup>22</sup> The scriptures indicate Elijah ascended to heaven in a whirlwind and the young Elisha stood by ever so committed to seeing his desire fulfilled. As it were, the promise given to Elisha was brought to fruition symbolically through the new ownership of Elijah's cloak and practically through the demonstration of similar works of that of the prophet e.g., 2 Kings 2:13-14. Moreover, the confirmation of the transference of spiritual power is offered by the company of prophets who witnessed to actions of Elisha in 2 Kings 2:15. To this end, the readers of this account are informed of Elisha succeeding the work of his predecessor Elijah.

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<sup>21</sup>2 Kgs 2:9.

<sup>22</sup>2 Kgs 2:10.

## Jesus - The Disciples

Author and long time representative of the Navigators (a renowned ministry of Christian discipleship) Leroy Elms shares, "Jesus Christ began His mission with a personal ministry of a little more than three years. One of the key aspects of that time was His training of the twelve disciples."<sup>23</sup> Jesus' three years of training was in preparation for the continuation of His ministry. He would bring to the attention of his disciples not just the affirmation of who He is, but also enlighten them about the kingdom of heaven, the keeping of his teaching, and the perpetuation of his works and wonders—all for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission. Acts 1:8 Jesus charges his remaining post-Calvary disciples to get ready to receive power, (dunamis), which will enable them to be his witnesses. Furthermore Acts 2:1-42 reveals to the reader the aforementioned deputation of the disciples Christ by way of a designated dunamis; and the ensuing witness of Christ which is made that results in the continuation of the Jesus' ministry as all who gladly received the disciples' message "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Jesus laid the groundwork for the continuity of the gospel message, the ongoing witness of Christ, and expanding the number of believers in God through him. In observance of his interactions with his disciples albeit for three years as well as the post-Pentecost actions of his disciples, it becomes clear that there is a necessity in furthering the message of Jesus through gaining, developing, and preparing new disciples. Thus the fulfillment of the Great Commission requires the making of disciples who, in turn, will

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<sup>23</sup>Leroy Elms, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 37.

continue the Great Commission, and therefore make disciples as well, which establishes a perpetual cycle of new believers, or otherwise stated, successors.

### Paul - Timothy

Beyond the recorded earthly ministry of Jesus Christ in the Gospels are writings, which share the perpetuation of the gospel ministry and works that confirm the continuation of the Christian faith not to mention witness among new generations believers. A paragon of the above-stated point is the Apostle Paul. Paul is not one who was among the original apostles (the twelve disciples whom Jesus trained prior to his crucifixion), however he is one who represents the next generation of converts who continue honoring the Great Commission.

Paul's conversion noted in Acts 9:1-22 is critical and pivotal in regards to the historical underpinning of soteriological succession. Moreover, Paul's missionary efforts mentioned in Acts 13:1-14:27 and Acts 15:40-18:23 provide the reader with insight related to growing expanse of the Christian witness. Notwithstanding, it is Paul's preparation of his protégé Timothy where a case can once again be made supporting the success of Christian ministry due to the succession of ministry in a successor.

Paul's letters to Timothy (1 & 2 Tm) offer the account of another leader transitioning e.g., 2 Timothy 4:6 and another individual charged to keep the faith and the witness of Christ going. 2 Timothy 2:1-15 shares the apostle's encouragement to his understudy to follow his example and continue the work of the ministry.

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone

competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself. Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Biblically the message is consistent supporting the thesis of the succession of ministry is through successors. To this end, the evaluation of ministry success should not rely solely on the success noted within a period of time, to which a specific generation of congregants was at the helm of the ministry's operations, but its assessment should also include how well she has continued ministry amid emerging generations and the cultural paradigm shifts that come along with them. Every present prevailing generation should therefore be preparing every ensuing generation to not only keep the faith but to continue in the work and witness of the Christian faith.

It cannot be stated enough: the success of the church is related to the church successfully fulfilling the Great Commission; and doing so not just laterally within the same generation but from generation to generation. This generation-to-generation approach though will require some give and take and not what heretofore may have been solely take what we give because each generation is different. Borrowing what the church has on occasion been metaphorically referred to as a bride in the scriptures, there is likelihood of the proverbial bride made up of Generations X, Y, and Z is not attracted to what may be considered in like metaphorical fashion as the traditional bridal garments of soteriological and eschatological preparation of the generations that preceded them.

While there is apprehension to ministry modifications and traditions giving way to trends, the trends cannot be ignored because trends and generations correspond; therefore to ignore and/or to avoid the trend is to ignore the generation. Sweet has cautioned the church to steer clear of what he calls trendinitis,<sup>24</sup> where truth of the kingdom is trumped by trends of the culture—but he also claims that the traditional church and the post-modern church can coexist, without the church looking like the post-modern culture.<sup>25</sup> At some point though cultures will intertwine, co-exist, and before long one will give way to the next and consequently, the new. Herein, the present church will need to prepare the church for change and do so, by remaining relevant through incorporating current trends of culture within her ministry.

At the time of this ministry project Generations X, Y, and Z coincide with the Information Age, the Computer Age, and/or the Digital Era. At the same time my ministry context does not cater to this generation or its cultural trends of Internet use and Social media. The state of the art of this ministry will endeavor to establish continuity of ministry through its effort to incorporate present trends within her ministry methodology.

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<sup>24</sup>Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims*, 47.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

The Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20) is a fundamental praxis of faith, which Christians have for centuries ascribed to; whereas it is the belief that followers of Jesus Christ are to go and “make disciples of all nations.” These words and command of Christ indicate that the Christian faith extends beyond a personal claim of faith on into an active practice of faith through the evangelizing of countless others to become followers of Christ. Herein, disciples of Christ are not to consider a belief in Jesus Christ as the conclusion of their faith commitment, but to the contrary, they are to see it as a commencement towards building the body of believers: the ecclesia.

For the most part, Jesus spent the years of his biblically recorded earthly ministry preparing his disciples to be able to fulfill the above stated directive to go and make disciples. Every miracle, every parable, every moment of fellowship experienced by his followers was all a part of Jesus’ pedagogy and preparation. According to Hebrews 12:2, the life Jesus is considered the paradigm of faith; and it is for that reason that the writer of Hebrews admonishes his reader to examine the life of Jesus; for Jesus’ life e.g. his living, was and is a divine teaching tool and training method. Furthermore, biblical history informs that those who shared with him regularly during his ministry years benefited from such an organic tutelage.

Indeed, the renowned disciples of biblical record are reported as those who would initiate the witness of Jesus following his ascension. Their ability to do so derived from the years spent in fellowship with Jesus, which consequently led to their familiarity of Christ and their faith in him, his words, and his way. Moreover, their time with Christ as their rabbi provided them with the curriculum for the teaching, which they would be required to pass on to new converts. All the same, the Holy Spirit would serve as the compulsion by which Jesus' disciples would go forth and fulfill his prophetic claim noted in Acts 1:8, whereas they would be witnesses of Jesus in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The Voice translation of the Bible transliterates the conclusion of the Acts 1:8 passage in the following manner: "And finally to the farthest places on earth." To this end, the post-modern ecclesia i.e. discipleship and church of Jesus Christ, having the mandate of scripture and the early disciples of biblical record serving as a model for discipleship, Christian faith and practice, are to likewise go forth and be Jesus' witnesses proximal to their locale and global in their scope, scheme, and service to the Lord.

It has been over two millennia since the early disciples initiated the call of the Lord on the well-known Day of Pentecost and witnessed to thousands preoccupied with festival celebrations. To be sure, more than two thousand years have passed from the time when 3,000 people were counted as those added to the church as a result of the Peter's testimony and the disciples witness. The Acts of the Apostles reports that at the inception of The Way the discipleship of Jesus "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and

fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”<sup>1</sup> Herein, is a tipping point regarding Christian ministry. Best selling author, Malcolm Gladwell, offers the following from his work with such a title: *The Tipping Point*: “The name given to that one dramatic moment in an epidemic when the everything can change all at once is the Tipping Point.”<sup>2</sup> In light of this, Acts 2:42 is the fulcrum for the religious community that is based upon faith in Jesus Christ.

Acts 2:42 asserts the discipleship of Jesus Christ “continued steadfastly” (Gr. *proskartereo*) meaning those who believed remained committed and devoted to the didactic method of their fledgling faith community. However, as time would have it, change would find its way into the religious routine of those who were a part of The Way. The continuity of praxis would be affected by cultural change. Moreover, as cultures evolved albeit good, bad, and/or indifferent modifications to Christian religion per se have been nonstop since that distinguished Day of Pentecost. For instance, observation of the Church during the historical cultural transition of the Age of Reason period provides a sampling of shifts that have been made and reveal that Christians have indeed veered away from the original faith community’s template of teaching, fellowship, communion, mission, and obligation.

The Church was impacted by a number of events during the 17th century: The Thirty Years War, King Charles I appointment of William Laud to serve as Archbishop of Canterbury, the abolishment of the episcopacy in Scotland and England as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:42 (KJV).

<sup>2</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point How Little Things Can Make A Big Difference* (New York, NY: Little Brown & Company, 2000), 9.



abrogation of the Book of Common Prayer, and the Catholic Church no longer being a central power throughout Europe are just a few noted events that would have a role in the reshaping of the Church. This period was a period of change: philosophically, theologically, ideologically, and globally. People were fleeing Europe across the Atlantic to venture into the proverbial New World all in the name of opportunity. And such an opportunistic venture would eventually have a part in the variant views of the Church's role. For example: A new world would require more than just relocating; there would need to be a definitive departure from the superstitions and the structures that were in place. Certain people would have to take it upon themselves to challenge well-founded traditions and beliefs; they would have to provide opinions, arguments, theories and so forth from which others could refer, defer, and stand upon in order to distinguish themselves. To this end, they would make a philosophical departure as well as a physical one from the old guard. Individuals such as John Locke, François-Marie Aroue (Voltaire), Denis Diderot, David Hume, Jean le Rond d'Alembert would arm themselves with reason to address hardened compulsory views. The New World would now come about not just because of the Thirty Years Wars; neither because of the immutable positions and inhumane treatment attributed to the monarchy of the period; but now it would come about because of new wars. This time the battles would be between ideology and theology, science and superstition, and/or reason and revelation.

According to Howard Zinn, there was a growing perception of defective societies, which caused a number of people in the aftermath of the Dutch and English revolutions to endeavor to bring change by changing ideas. To this end, it became—at least to the

rationalist, deist, and philosophes of the time—very important to address the working of the world. Culture was shifting by way of exploration.

Nicolaus Copernicus, who like, Aristarchus of Samos, dared to wonder about the heavens and the greater activity beyond the planet Earth. In his observation, Copernicus offered that the earth moved or orbited around the sun. This theory would remain just that theory until Galileo Galilei provided empirical evidence of Copernicus claim. Galileo, a renowned Italian astronomer and mathematician was however condemned by Roman Inquisition and was forced to deny Copernicus' claim because their positions (Copernicus and Galileo) challenged the church's authority as the source of truth.

Theologically, the Church suggests given the biblical account of creation and the ensuing drama between God and humankind, sin and redemption, it would not be unreasonable that the earth is positioned at the center of the universe to provide what MacCulloch calls "the stage for that drama."<sup>3</sup> The actual drama though would center on Copernicus' theory and Galileo's validation of it, as Isaac Newton would assert in his work *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* that "all laws of motion in the heavens and on the earth, were harmonized in a mater principle for the universe, the law of gravitation."<sup>4</sup> Newton's profound work underpinned Copernicus and Galileo's theories and was the undoing of the church's monolithic and manipulative position. A new revolution was now taking place—the intellectual revolution. The "sudden access to the

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<sup>3</sup>Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2010), 684.

<sup>4</sup>Shelly Bruce, *Church History In Plain Language* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2013), 314.

mysteries of the universe seemed to magnify the role of human reason.”<sup>5</sup> And with that said: the Age of Reason was underway shifting and shaping culture to embark upon a new path of progress in spite of laden superstitions within society.

The Church and her firm position—biblical literalism, divine-right-of-kings and oppressive ways, just to name a few—was the subject of provocative debate. There were emphatic denunciations of the Catholic Church. Voltaire led the way with his writings, which championed the cause of reason and right thinking over and against religious and superstitious thinking. The church, who stood long and strong on what the Bible said literally, what was interpreted by faith, and who held fast to sola scriptura, encountered opposition from rationalists and deists. Before long matters that heretofore had not been open for interpretation were open for interpretation.

The church was no longer exempt from criticism. Arguments were made and positions were taken against the church. And while Voltaire, Hume, and Descartes penned works and proclaimed—almost with an atheistic tone—against the convictions held by the church, Jonathan Edwards, and George Whitfield were penning works and lifting their voices to express their convictions regarding Christ. Herein, there were matters of the state and matters of salvation with equally fervent, ardent, passionate, and zealous parties: Neither voice or position was silenced; instead they simply spoke to a world at the same time.

Culture was being cultivated to the idea of ideas. A difference of opinion did not have to result in imprisonment, banishment, war, mutilation, or worse. On the contrary, it

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

resulted in the challenge to change. Sociologically communities of faith had to consider changing or giving way to new formations of faith communities.

In the following century (18<sup>th</sup> century) American Thomas Jefferson, while a member of the General Assembly of Virginia, would propose a bill stating, “All men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions on matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.”<sup>6</sup> A cultural paradigm shift occurred and the role of Christian faith weighed heavily in the transition. Historian Roger Osborne on the subject believed “unfettered rational enquiry would lead to a coherent body of knowledge, driven by universal laws, that would reveal a benevolent pattern in all things.”<sup>7</sup> From Osborne’s proposal, the freedom to inquire and the frequency of inquiring does not lead to a denial of God, but on the contrary—a discovery of God: in that regardless of the natural laws examined, they will reveal as stated “a benevolent pattern in all things.”

As The Age of Reason was the result of conflict and controversy, history reveals that coincidentally this historical period did not adversely affect society, but actually aided in the advancement of society. Moreover, this period did not foster an ecclesiastical transition from theistic to atheistic views. Quite the reverse, it actually broadened theological viewpoints.

While so many fought intellectually, philosophically, and physically over the time endured traditions that were in place; and others fought the same for the need for change:

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<sup>6</sup>Jonathan Hill, *Handbook To The History Of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2006), 319.

<sup>7</sup>Jonathan Osborne, *Civilization: A New History Of The Western World* (Oxford, UK: Lion Publishing, Mayfield House, 2006).

progress was actually in the mix. And in the end, change won. In a real way a perpetual paradigm was revealed through all of this, and that is: Change is inevitable; culture will undergo cultural shifts even after great resistance: Change happens. To this end, The Age of Reason is a foundational period in history setting the stage for similar cultural paradigm shifts that will follow centuries beyond it e.g. the Information Age.

Howard Zin's cursory commentary on the innovations which followed the agricultural revolution of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century that stated: "Technical innovation was no longer a haphazard occurrence which took decades or even centuries to find acceptance, but a requirement for success," could very well serve as commentary for the Information Age as well. The pace of change has changed with technological innovations. Technology has bred the need for new technology and the cycle now of the new and the next is an incessant one. Consequently, the culture of the present millennium, just as Zin commented on the innovative culture of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, sees innovation as a requirement for success.

Indeed, the Postmodern Era has encountered change at a pace much faster than previous era's. This is especially true with the dawning of the Digital Age. What may have taken years, as in decades to hundreds of years in order for a cultural shift to take place, has been reduced to however long it takes for the next technological idea to catch on—this could amount to under a years time. Moreover, the boundaries of society have expanded as well. The Internet and social network communication is reflective of a global audience. In the present millennium the speed by which information travels is a matter of milliseconds and the distance and diversity of its depository is near limitless. To say this is a vast improvement when juxtaposed to the four weeks time it may have taken

for the Dutch provinces of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to receive a response to their request from the throne would be far beyond a considerable understatement.

As with the changes that came through the shifting and shaping of the culture during The Age of Reason—so goes the same with the Information Age. There is unequivocally a shifting and shaping of culture. Computers and Internet, websites and social networks, have all changed society from individual life styles managed on a personal level—to locally, regionally, nationally, and globally—reaching relationships and communications. Dubbed as "one of North America's leading digital visionaries"<sup>8</sup> Mitch Joel says, "We no longer live in a world where there are Six Degrees of Separation (where any one person is connected to anybody else through fewer than six degrees of separation). We are all intrinsically connected through technology, the Internet, and our mobile devices. We are not connected by degrees anymore; we are simply connected. We are all a click (a pixel) away from one another."<sup>9</sup>

The world itself is now a part of a new community—a community known by several labels: the online community, the virtual community, the cyber culture, the hyper culture, and simply, wired are just a few of its tags. This is the nomenclature of the Information/Digital Age.

Wall mounted telephones with long coiled cords, record players and albums, boom boxes and cassette tapes, encyclopedia's and Randall McNally maps—these things and so much more have been consolidated into hard drives, SIM cards, and other like storage devices to accommodate this new community. Portable phones have evolved into

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<sup>8</sup>Twist Image, "Six Pixels of Separation," <http://www.twistimage.com/about-mitch/>.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 4.

smart phones. Map books and foldable maps have been replaced with map applications (Apps) and global positioning systems (GPS). The research library has, for some, been reduced to Google, Bing, and Yahoo. Phone operators have taken a back seat to Siri. Chance meetings and relationships born from coincidental encounters or a friend who knows a friend have been put aside for dating web sites such as eHarmony.com, Match.com, and ChristianMingle.com. The new culture is digitally driven and digitally connected. Moreover, the new community is now a global one. The World Wide Web is just that—a worldwide web of information and people. Society has increasingly become attached to the technological devices the virtual community continues to spawn. Things—diverse things—tangible and intangible things become old and out dated fast. Relevancy is regularly challenged. And just as the above mentioned list those once norms to culture having been replaced due to some form of new technology—so goes the church.

The paradigm shift noted through the Information Age has presented and presents a challenge to the church of the new millennium. Century's prior the issue at hand pertained to reason and faith, science and superstition, not to mention the authority of the church. With technology driving so much in today's world, a new tension is tugging at the religious institutions: the traditional versus the trendy. How can the church remain relevant and reverent at the same time? Moreover, can the church remain a church of integrity while she transitions into what Jonathan Walton suggests in his work *Watch This as a Culture Industry*?

Looking at the issues in which the church faced in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the church of this current millennium can derive the following:

- a) Cultural shifts do not occur without impacting the church and/or do not take place where the church will have a central role
- b) There will be a cultural battle for and against change, however, the continuous evolution related to progress aligns with the inevitable: change will take place; change wins and/or is the result the battle.
- c) The church must not allow changes in culture to render the church irrelevant, but must adjust and adapt without aborting her divine mission.

To the latter there is growing concern that the church will not keep pace.

Consultant, author and Leadership Network speaker Reggie McNeal entitled the opening chapter of his work *The Present Future*, “New Reality Number One, The Collapse of the Church Culture” citing “The current church culture is on life support.”<sup>10</sup> Prolific writer Pastor James Emery White cites Evangelical minister Leith Anderson in his work *Rethinking Church* stating, “The church is literally dying for change.”<sup>11</sup> Alvin Toffler adds, “Unless man quickly learns to control the rate of change in his personal affairs as well as society at large, we are doomed to massive adaptational breakdown.”<sup>12</sup> In *Into The Future*, Rick Warren shares, “The message must never change, but the methods must change with each new generation.” And in the same work R. C. Sproul is quoted saying, “The gospel is news to each generation, and we must seek new ways to address our times.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Reggie McNeal, *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions For The Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishing, 2003), 1.

<sup>11</sup>White, *Rethinking Church*, 15.

<sup>12</sup>M. Rex Miller, *The Millennium Matrix: Reclaiming the Past, Reframing the Future of the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 1.

<sup>13</sup>Warren Bird, Elmer Towns, *Into The Future. Turning Today's Church Trends Into Tomorrow's Opportunities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 32.



The Age of Reason brought about freedom. What was heretofore regulated was no longer bound. Thinkers in essence produced and prevailed in these revolutionary historical periods. The Information Age has its own instigators: *tinkerers* as Robert Wuthnow would refer to them. These tinkerers, according to Wuthnow, “do not rely on only one way of doing things. Their approach to life is practical. They get things done, and usually this happens by improvising, and piecing together an idea from here, a skill from there, and a contact from somewhere else.”<sup>14</sup> In this new era the technological tinkerer has produced and is prevailing. Notwithstanding, the church does not need to be intimidated by the Internet, nor should she look upon technology as a whole with disdain, as if it has not place in the church.

Tom Beaudoin offers that cyberspace actually infers a replication of the faith community and man’s relationship with God. Beaudoin claims, “If cyberspace offers a metaphor for divine-human experiences, those experiences happen concretely through cybercommunities of faith. Cyberspace—particularly the Internet—is an appropriate medium to serve as a communal center.”<sup>15</sup> Although Beaudoin work primarily is a critique on Generation X, this writer finds it applicable to the wired not to mention, the religious community as a whole.

The cyberworld may very well become the communal center for all given the progressing pace and seemingly endless possibilities of the World Wide Web. To this end, the church must tinker with her own methodology regarding her worship, her

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<sup>14</sup>Robert Wuthnow, *After The Baby Boomers: How Twenty- And Thirty Somethings Are Shaping The Future Of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>15</sup>Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest Of Generation X* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass Publishers, 2000), 87-8.

discipleship, her service, and her witness. The church of today has a good paradigm to draw from: the Church of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. As the freedoms were extended and as religion expanded in its diversity—the church did not lose stride, but was an integral part of the social change. The church of the Information Age must do the same and endeavor to not necessarily be reactionary to the cultural shifts, but a part of the cultural shift itself—staying in stride with the change and keeping pace with the people who are advancing socially, intellectually, etc. In all of her adaptations, the church must maintain her essential convictions and endeavor to fulfill her most fundamental mission—The Great Commission, which is noted in Matthew 28:18-20.

The Great Commission is the culmination of the disciple's lessons learned organically through the day-to-day teachings of Jesus. The Great Commission is also the commencement of disciples of Jesus to go forth in service to God throughout the world for the purpose of changing lives and subsequently, making disciples. Jesus instructed his disciples to make disciples of all nations. He, in turn, was making it clear to not place limits on being his witness. This is the church's missiological foundation. The church is to seek to win any and all to a converted and committed life of faith in Jesus Christ, following the doctrine, dogma, and designation associated with Christ.

The apostle Paul offers his testimony regarding his unbiased efforts to be a witness of Christ, as he states, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under

Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.<sup>16</sup> Paul did made adjustments while maintaining his integrity to the faith—all for the purpose of winning as many as possible—even if all that was possible at the time were just some.

The tension and tentativeness of the postmodern church is palpable, particularly when the call is to do as the apostle Paul did, and adjust to the culture in her mission to be a Christian witness. Whitehead states, "the relationship of a culture—its convictions, biases, insights—to a religious tradition and so to theological reflection has an ambiguous and intriguing history." I see Whitehead's claim in reverse—and suggests that the culture of the church has its convictions, and bias and so forth, which do not afford for reflection of a culture outside of its own. The church must bear in mind that the apostle Paul could not become as Jew or one under the law or one not under the law if he himself did not know what each were, why they were, and how they were. To this end, the church cannot be afraid to incorporate technology, but must seek to inform herself on the subject of technological advancements and any other progressive aspects relative to the culture outside of her own. Moreover, the Christian church must seek to not necessarily incorporate all of that which is worldly into her infrastructure, but more so infiltrate the culture she is seeking to impact and always maintaining her identity and integrity throughout her mission.

Should the modernization of civilization require the modernization of Christian ministry as well? Yes. Should Christians adjust, and adapt and bend even from their

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<sup>16</sup>1 Cor 9:19-23 (NIV).

principles and practice in the faith to the extent that the ecclesia surrenders her sacerdotal identity for the sake of appealing and appeasing the society in which she is a part? That would be a resounding, no! The apostle Paul conveys, “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.”<sup>17</sup>

Just as the church is sanctified so are her motives in ministry to be. For instance, the matter at hand is actually one of intent and utility. Is the objective to spread the gospel message, to convert non-believers, to encourage discipleship and educate disciples? Is the motive behind certain adaptations and adjustments to incorporate trends of the culture outside of the church’s tradition—all for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission? The church must take note that Jesus in essence said, get the job done. When it came to making disciples, he simply said, Go and make them; he did not say how or what specifically to do to make them. More specific instructions came afterwards—after people have become disciples.

Donald Messer claims, “Ministry is the function of the church as a whole. ...The Church is ministry. Its *raison d’etre* is service to the world. There is no other reason for the church exist.” Returning to the protagonist and paradigm of the Christian faith—Jesus Christ; it is revealed that familiarity with culture lends to culture becoming familiar with the Christian faith. After all, Jesus Christ, according to John 1:14 is the word made flesh and made his dwelling among us. Jesus is the ultimate example of utilizing what you can for the purpose of kingdom building. The apostle Paul so aptly put it: “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not

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<sup>17</sup>2 Cor 4:10 (NIV).

consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”<sup>18</sup>

And so, the mission of the church is to be sacrificial for the cause of the kingdom of God and evangelically flexible for the purpose of making disciples of all nations. The church’s motive must be her mission; this must be her driving force. By doing so, she will realize that she is not lagging behind, but actually leading—and a world who believes in and places its faith in science, technology and cultural advancements will (as the church believes) come to the realization through the efforts of the church that it is also required to dedicate itself to the Lord Jesus Christ and the leading Jesus Christ in order to escape a damnable eternal end. Hence, discipleship becomes the reasonable and lone alternative. So no matter the cultural shift, the continuity of mission and ministry is not optional, but obligatory: it must be done!

Bearing in mind the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been inundated with technological advancements, which have been a constant cycle of innovation. The Internet, the media, and the sciences continue to create to further their respected industries. There is one new thing after another: an endless cycle of innovation. Notwithstanding, the Christian church has discovered in the past and may continue to discover just how the cultural advancements with the Internet, media, and sciences can be used to her advantage to be a more effective and efficient witness and to fulfill the aforementioned Great Commission. Existentially technology is not limited to a secular purpose. Although the original scope

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<sup>18</sup>Phil 2:5-8 (NIV).

of technology's intention(s) may not have included the Great Commission of the church, its missiological practicality is not to go unexplored.

Biblically, Mark 14:3-9 serves as a foundation that underpins the usefulness of things, which may have been initially made for other purposes. Through the support of this pericope what may have been created and/or utilized for a specific application and/or operation can be incorporated for sake of accomplishing Christian ministry and mission as well. The following is an exegetical examination of Mark 14:3-9 for the express purpose of endorsing the integration of technological tools into Christian praxis.

Although this story is shared—in general is in every gospel account—the details to the narratives do not correspond one with another, especially when it comes to the timing of the event (certainly if John's telling of the story is brought into the discussion). It is agreed upon that Passover serves as a marker—as some indicator as to the timeframe surrounding what the gospel writers record. However, pinpointing how many days prior synoptically to the Passover in which the story begins proves to be undetermined. To this end, the meal in question may or may not be related to the aforementioned obligatory Jewish festival. Notwithstanding, Mark establishes the observance to be the Passover and the ensuing events of the pericope to have occurred two days prior to this particular Jewish celebration.

Mark is very specific with the location of this event: the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany. Bethany may be brought to the reader's attention for the purposes of both locality and familiarity—as it was a place that Jesus frequented in his travels. Moreover, Simon the Leper, although he escapes recognition due to no legitimate biography, brief or otherwise, remains relatively unidentified to scholars outside of his mentioning in this

narrative. Therefore, the consensus is all conjecture concerning Simon based on the information provided through the text. Nevertheless, there are those who lean heavily toward the possibility that Simon was a person whom Jesus healed. Should this be the case, than his inactions juxtaposed to the actions of the nameless woman may prove to be another reason he is made known in the text.

The woman mentioned in the narrative synoptically is anonymous, but in John's narrative, which bares so much similarity, she is identified as Mary, the sister of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. Whether Mary is the woman of Mark's narrative is uncertain. Essential to the purpose of biblical foundation, however is not necessarily who she is, but what she does. This woman takes an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, breaks it, and proceeds to pour the perfume on the head of Jesus. Her actions create a stir amongst those who witnessed what she did. Indignant is the word used to describe their attitude as they began to comment on and criticize the woman's behavior. "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a years wages and the money given to the poor." It was not enough that they spoke so angrily over her actions, they went on to "rebuke her harshly." Jesus however, the recipient of her gesture—defends her actions, he defends her, and he declares that what she did, she did for him.

Though there are a number of characters named and nameless in this narrative, the attention of the passage is not to be on the people as much as it should be on the prop: the alabaster jar of perfume. The jar made of alabaster (alabastron)—the mineral known as very fine gypsum was used often to make statues but also was commonly carved into decorative ornamental vases. At times alabaster is translated and referred to as marble. The primary use is to hold perfumed oil used for bathing such is implied in this passage.

The content of the alabaster jar was very expensive perfume. According to Joseph Coray, a contributing researcher, and writer to the *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, perfumes were used for religious as well as social purposes. In relation to the text at hand, Coray cosigns with Pliny and states, “that guests arriving for dinner parties, had their hands and feet bathed and perfumed before coming into a banquet hall” and suggests “the anointing of Jesus at Bethany may indicate this practice ...as an act of hospitality and kindness.”<sup>19</sup>

The alabaster jar—alone was of value, however, the perfume mentioned, which it contained is hinted as being nard—pure nard by John’s account of a very similar story. If this is the case and the alabaster jar contained pure nard than the ointment has extreme value for it would have been extracted from the *Nardostachys jatamansi* plant, which is known to grow in the Himalayas of India. In order for this perfume to originate in India and end up in Bethany would highly project its value.<sup>20</sup> Herein, Mark 14:5 refers to a years wages in value as the cost of the perfume. Brooks supposes an estimated value of three hundred denarii—whereas a denarius was consider a days wages for the common laborer of that period.<sup>21</sup> Three hundred denarii stand in agreement with Mark’s valuation.

The breaking (συντρίψασα) of the jar and the pouring down (κατέχεεν) of the perfume was an act often reserved for special occasions to anoint people of honor. The woman of the passage seizes the moment to acknowledge, anoint, and honor Jesus. Those in the house took exception to her deed. The Bible says that they were indignant, angry, upset over an apparent inequity, stemming from this act of anointing. Those some (note,

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<sup>19</sup>*Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 1029.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 948.

<sup>21</sup>*The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2003), 222.



not all) who disagreed strongly with the waste of the perfume: rebuked her harshly.

Although the New International Version of the scriptures has transliterated *apōleia* (ἀπώλεια) as waste, it actually refers to destruction and ruin. Herein, those who opposed what she did saw what she did as destroying and ruining, which is confirmed by the fact that they held in mind an alternative use of the perfume which was to sell it and to give the proceeds to the poor. The harsh rebuke was not necessarily to her anointing of Jesus, but rather to what was used to do so. In other words, those who took exception to her actions were actually taking exception to the using of the alabaster box of perfume in this fashion. Hence at the center of the pericope is actually the alabaster jar of perfume.

As society engages upon shifts in its culture with advancements in science, technology, media, marketing, and such—the church will have to give consideration as to whether she will stay in stride. Already there is disagreement, arguments, and division among the community of faith related to what is and is not acceptable in ministry endeavors. At the core of the argument is a definitive line of demarcation distinguishing what is of the world and what is of the church—and in no way can the church utilize that which has been deemed worldly and thus earmarked for worldly purposes. From instruments to the Internet—yet what should silence the dispute is the answer to one question: Are the objects being used to acknowledge Jesus, to cosign with his assignment and to bring glory to the kingdom of God? This was the case with the woman of the text. Jesus silenced the opposition by explain and exposing her motives. “She has done a beautiful thing to me.” It is not the object that should be objected, not when it is utilized in sync with the Savior’s mission. To this end, critics to the contemporary moves in

Christian ministry should take notice of Jesus' acceptance of things having an alternative use, particularly when that use furthers his work and witness.

The anointing of Jesus was—as Jesus stated—for his burial. What this woman did was an act of faith, which could also be summed up as an action that was before everyone's time. The burial of Jesus was a future act, which she was acting upon in the present. Often when the church is functioning outside the box (which is an appropriate pun given the alabaster box of the pericope) many see it as inappropriate, when what the church did could just very well just be something that was ahead of their time.

Historically, theologically, and biblically the theoretical position of the writer has sufficient grounding, in that as cultural paradigm shifts occur, the church (ecclesia) will have to consider making shifts of her own to remain relevant in her undertaking of the Great Commission. Irrespective to the innovative means, which the general population may embrace, ascribe to, and utilize with frequency for whatever intended reasons; when the church can envision the utilization of the same innovative means and/or a variation of the same for the fulfillment of the Great Commission, the church must give attention to its implementation within her own community for the sake of relevance and the expanding of her faith community. The writer foresees theoretically an inevitable fusion of modern technology/mass communication mediums e.g. social media and the methodology of ministry—specifically regarding evangelism and discipleship, within the ministry context of the writer. In addition, the writer believes this theoretical position will serve a much broader field encompassing any popular cultural paradigm shift and the ensuing need to adapt and implement within the context of Christian ministry.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Summary**

Biblically, theologically, and historically, change has proven to be more than just an inevitable part of the life experience; it has also proven to be purposeful for the advancement of the work and witness of Jesus Christ. Just the same, cultural trends have proven to be more than mere social fads. Indeed, cultural trends also have served as the inspiration to innovative Christian ministry models. In the post-modern, culture social trends have segued into ministry trends. Just considering historical breakthroughs by way of technology, it can be inductively predicted that as innovations gain acceptance in society, so will churches consider introducing a version of the same in the name of ministry. For instance: radio has led to religious radio broadcasts. Television has led to televangelists and the airing of evangelical crusades. Cassette recordings have led to cassette tapes of sermons, and the introduction of VHS tapes and DVD videos in the secular market has led to church services being recorded and sold in the same format: video.

Irrespective to those who may oppose the so called worldly trappings trespassing upon holy ground and entering into the sacred space of the sanctuary, church ministries still adapted and implemented a number of social trends as a form of Christian ministry and have done so for the sake of remaining relevant. The truth is Christian ministry

should not frown upon the church (ecclesia) striving to remain relevant. After all, what greater paradigm is there that speaks to the relevancy of Christian ministry than the word becoming flesh? And yet, even though, fundamentally the Christian church derives from the ultimate paradigm of relevant ministry—that being Jesus Christ, there are ministries whom have lagged behind the cultural shifts and have not kept stride with popular social changes to remain relevant. This ministry context is an example of such whereas instead of implementing innovative relevant ministry, the church of the researchers context historically has been wedded to a religious praxis despite the possibility of whether it could benefit from efforts of transitional and/or missional relevance or not.

A serious and significant downfall of a ministry's lack of relevance is that the church runs the risk of not serving the kingdom of God at her optimum level. For instance, if the church does not maintain pace with cultural changes and societal trends with innovative ministry that reflects such trends—having salvation and discipleship as the aim and end—the church will be in jeopardy of losing her relevance and limiting her reach. As a result, the church underachieves her mission and her call to honor the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20), therefore, would render her unsuccessful. An unsuccessful church is a theological and eschatological contradiction to those who ascribe to the Church Triumphant.

The church is intended to be successful and it is a theoretical position of the researcher that a great deal of the church's success will rely on her ability to adapt without forfeiting her integrity as a body of believers. It is certainly essential for the church to make ministry adjustments for the sake of remaining relevant in her witness, relevant in her evangelistic reach, and relevant in her method of discipleship. Therefore,

if traditional churches shift their ministry methodology by incorporating innovative methods relevant to their culture, and concurrently, or reactively do their part to stay in stride with social changes as society advances itself, the results would reflect a kingdom congruent objective; one that is seeking optimum results for God and honoring the Great Commission to a greater degree.

An analyses of the ministry context and spiritual journey and the juxtaposition of the two has revealed the pressing need to integrate technological tools related to social trends that will transcend the church's traditional methodology of ministry. To neglect such adjustments would further an unproductive trend, which was revealed through the analysis. Specifically, the apposition of my spiritual journey and ministry context in the areas of business and ministry revealed that failure to remain relevant came with an undesirable cost. Both business and ministry suffered by plateauing through their immutability. By not changing and adjusting their methodology to mirror cultural trends resulted in once successful entities being relegated to an undistinguished status. To this end, there is a desire to modify the ministry context, so that Christian ministry will go forth without any disruption, delay or cessation. Indeed, it is my desire to seek to maintain the continuity of ministry concurrent with the pace of that in which society recognizes, embraces, and utilizes with popularity.

Given consideration to the above mentioned, this project will endeavor to integrate trends which coincide with a generational context; specifically technology or social media into the ministry context.

Social media has exponentially impacted our culture. Since its inception, for instance, the interaction between individuals utilizing various social media technology

has steadily risen. According to a report published in 2010 by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) many Internet users are concomitantly using social media applications and more than 1 billion people who sought social media network subscriptions for their mobile phones in the course of a year (2009-2010) is an indication of social media's cultural impact. Cultural shifts such as those related to society's growing demand and dependency upon social media has served as inspiration to perform this project of integration with the aim being the establishment of an effective means of Christian ministry; that is until this integration is rendered fruitless by the next demand for ministry adaptability due to prominent cultural shifts.

The leader is responsible for not just leading change, but leading the change in the culture of the business.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, if the culture of the church is going the change, it will be largely due to the appointed leader, which is, in many cases, the pastor. Herein, it becomes incumbent upon the pastor to lead the congregation in the cultural shift required for maintaining relevant ministry. This said, as pastors becomes aware of popular cultural trends, which maybe useful for maintaining a relevant ministry, he or she must take the initiative—all the while maintaining integrity to the kingdom of God—and lead the congregation in her effort to implement such trends within his or her context to maintain the continuity of Christian ministry amid the emerging cultural paradigm shifts that are taking place. This is the effort regarding the synergy of generational trends and ministry application.

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<sup>1</sup>“The Qualities of Leadership,” accessed April 4, 2013, <http://www.corneliusassoc.com/library.html>. The Qualities of Leadership: Leading a “Readiness for Change” Culture. Pdf.

## **Methodology**

This project will utilize a data triangulation method to ascertain empirical results for which this project could benefit from a practical approach of maintaining the continuity of Christian ministry amid emerging cultural paradigm shifts. This is a qualitative ontological study whereas much of the focus given and data collected is a comprehensive work dedicated to observing objectively the introduction and integration of a popular cultural trend within a ministry context to determine whether there is an impact upon Christian discipleship.

First, members from the congregation will serve as the stakeholders in the project. From the congregation a focus group comprised of males and females representing the following generational categories e.g. Silent Generation, Boomers/Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. A minimum of three (3) individuals was selected from each generational group and these individuals will serve as the focus group for this project. Each focus group participant will receive a Project Questionnaire Sheet and will be asked to complete the questionnaires.

The project itself will consist of a sermon series that emphasizes the importance of the ministry either becoming and/or remaining relevant through the incorporation of popular cultural trends into the present ministry context. In addition, a Bible study and a lesson on the use of social media will be shared with the congregation mostly with the intention of the focus group as the audience. Subsequently, one-on-one in depth post-project interviews will be conducted from a random sampling of the members of this focus group. Lastly, information will be ascertained through the members of the focus group posting in journals to determine prior social media usage as the projects end. At the

conclusion of the project when all data is collected, a report stating the findings of the project will be provided.

### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this project presupposes that the continuity of Christian ministry requires the integration of popular cultural trends as a ministry methodology of fulfilling the Great Commission. Moreover, it is my contention that popular cultural trends juxtapose preceding categorical generations and as a result what is trendy can appear to be worldly and therefore unacceptable to a local church congregation who is generationally unfamiliar to that which is trending culturally outside of its church community and/or context. To this end, this project seeks to attract the culture of popular trends for the purpose of establishing congregational continuity from an established cultural context to an emerging cultural community. And so, if a popular cultural trend is identified and incorporated as a ministry approach with the intention of targeting the community/culture, which identifies with the trend, than a greater interest in the discipleship of Christ will take place from those who associate with the trend. For the purposes of this project Generations X, Y, and Z will be targeted through the use of a popular technological trend e.g. Social Media as ministry tool and a means to engage those of these generations more as a part of the Christian community.

### **Project Questionnaire Sheet**

1. How involved are you in the ministry of your church?

Very involved \_\_\_\_\_

Involved \_\_\_\_\_



Somewhat involved \_\_\_\_\_

Not involved \_\_\_\_\_

2. How involved are you in ministry outside of your church?

Very involved \_\_\_\_\_

Involved \_\_\_\_\_

Somewhat involved \_\_\_\_\_

Not involved \_\_\_\_\_

3. How often do you share your faith with others?

Very frequently \_\_\_\_\_

Frequently \_\_\_\_\_

Infrequently \_\_\_\_\_

Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

4. How often do you use technology to witness to others about Christ?

Very frequently \_\_\_\_\_

Frequently \_\_\_\_\_

Infrequently \_\_\_\_\_

Not at all \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you believe the church makes adequate use of technology?

Strongly agree \_\_\_\_\_

Agree \_\_\_\_\_

Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

Strongly disagree \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you believe the United Baptist Church demonstrates an adequate approach to make disciples of the younger generations?

Strongly agree \_\_\_\_\_

Agree \_\_\_\_\_

Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

Strongly disagree \_\_\_\_\_

7. Technology e.g. social media is vital to reaching younger generations as in generations X, Y and Z e.g. individuals born during 1964 and 2000.

Strongly agree \_\_\_\_\_

Agree \_\_\_\_\_

Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

Strongly disagree \_\_\_\_\_

8. Technology e.g. social media is vital to reaching the Silent and Boomer generations, e.g. individuals born during 1925 and 1963.

Strongly agree \_\_\_\_\_

Agree \_\_\_\_\_

Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

Strongly disagree \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you believe popular cultural trends should be incorporated within church traditions.

Strongly agree \_\_\_\_\_

Agree \_\_\_\_\_

Disagree \_\_\_\_\_

Strongly disagree \_\_\_\_\_

10. Which generation does your age range fall within?

The Silent Generation (born between 1925 - 1945) \_\_\_\_\_

Generation X/Baby Boomers (born between 1946 - 1964) \_\_\_\_\_

Generation Y/Millennials (born between 1965 - 1979) \_\_\_\_\_

Generation Z/The New Silent Generation (1980 - 2000) \_\_\_\_\_

### **Post Interview Questions**

- 1) Tell me how your interest in your faith has changed, if any, since you've incorporated social media as a part of your witness of the worship.
- 2) Tell me what different perspective you have about church, if any, since you have participated in this focus group.
- 3) Tell me if the sermons, bible study, and understanding of the scriptures during your participation in this focus group has, if at all, affected your opinion regarding the use of Social Media as a means of ministry.
- 4) Do you believe Social Media can effectively be used to reach others for the cause of making disciples and/or maintaining discipleship?

### **Project Timeline Summary**

- 1) A random sampling of the congregation of the context of the researcher, including those of the focus groups will receive a series of surveys. The information collected will be reviewed, tabled and revisited for comparison purposes at the conclusion of the project.
- 2) The project focus group will receive a Project Questionnaire Sheet prior. The information collected will be reviewed, tabled and revisited for comparison purposes at the conclusion of the project.
- 3) The researcher will preach four sermons and will provide a biblical teaching supporting the need for the church to adapt in order to attract new disciples to a practical faith in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the researcher will provide an instructional class on the use of technology (Social Media) as a witnessing and disciple-making tool. During this month, the project will be a preachment/practicum exercise in which the participant will be encouraged to utilize their Social Media tools to extend the message of the sermons to their social media followers.

- 4) The project focus group will receive a Questionnaire via the Internet and be asked to complete. The information collected will be used to juxtapose to the hard-copy questionnaire they received prior to determine what impact and/or difference, if any, the mode of survey distribution had upon the focus group participants.
- 5) Additionally, the researcher will collect journal data from selected members of the project focus group.

At the end of a series of sermons, biblical and social media instruction, take two weeks to evaluate the project. It is anticipated that the data and feedback from the surveys and interviews will agree with the hypothesis and serve as a paradigm for maintaining the continuity of Christian ministry amid emerging cultural paradigm shifts. All the same, the hypothesis that the utilization of social media via the Internet, cell phone, and tablet applications can prove to be a viable witnessing and discipleship tool and a means to accomplish the Great Commission through the cyber-community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; particularly among popular culture and emerging generations. The success of this program will offer a model for adaptive ministry to dominant cultural practices, which may require the church to incorporate.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

#### **The Research Project**

"Without data you're just another person with an opinion"<sup>1</sup> so says George Barna a post-modern authority on research particularly among the Christian faith community. To this end, it is essential to move from the theoretical to the practical in order to assure that this work is not a subjective document but a tested and proven thesis. This chapter will provide the reader with a collection of data, an analysis of the data, and the project findings. In addition, interviews with focus group participants are shared in this chapter to show what impact the project had and to present the project as a credible cure to the problem.

#### **The Project's Problem**

The United Baptist Church of Baltimore, Maryland in 2003 constructed a new, larger edifice for worship as well as an adjoining new administrative building. While this worship space and office space represented the new, the extent of the new could not be fully measured, however, the gap between the old and the new was quite wide. The previous facility was principally a sanctuary; the result of several old city structures that had been combined, retrofitted, and renovated into one building. The building served as

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<sup>1</sup>George Barna, *Future Cast: What Today's Trends Mean For Tomorrow's World* (Austin, TX: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2011), 2.

the main gathering for the United Baptist Church congregation since 1952. For nearly fifty years, the church experienced no upgrades structurally. As a result, the wear and tear upon the property was palpable. Moreover, the worship service format remained relatively the same for those nearly fifty years. Change, both infrastructure and structurally, were not an apparent priority in the aforementioned fifty-year span of history of the ministry.

The ministry took on new life in 1991 as its pastoral leadership underwent change e.g. the pastor, after forty-one years of service, retired at the age of eighty-nine and was succeeded by a new pastor, twenty-seven years of age with no pastoral experience. The congregation grew in membership and financially—to the degree that a new worship facility after a number of years was plausible and pursued. Herein, the construction of United's new church and administrative wing begun and the buildings that juxtaposed to the previous building were without question an extensive and expansive improvement. Notwithstanding, while the structure was obviously more contemporary comparably to the old being upgraded exponentially, the infrastructure did not concurrently engage similarly in a manner of newness regarding the ministry.

For years, although the church continued to grow numerically and experience greater financial gains, the novelty of the building began to fade. In kind, so did the church's growth all around. Members of the congregation were leaving; worshipping at and joining other local churches. Generationally, the congregation maintained a membership, which represented persons from the Silent Generation and the Baby Boomer Generation primarily. The ministry sustained itself week to week through the appeasement and/or relevance toward the afore-mentioned generations while maintaining

a number of but not ministering to with intention those of Generations Y and Z. With an apparent proverbial open back door those of Generations Y and Z, who represented the succession of the ministry in times to come, incrementally took flight. Moreover so did others who longed for more than an upgraded building: they wanted an up-to-date ministry too. To this end, relevant ministry was a critical issue facing the church. Although the United Baptist Church was routine and religious, she lacked relevance. To become relevant the church would have to entertain the implementation of popular cultural trends for the purpose of ministry, ministry success and ministry succession.

### **Project Hypothesis**

Relevant ministry more so than religious practice is the pattern set forth biblically and the paradigm presented by the life and teaching of Christ in order to accomplish the Great Commission, which should be incorporated particularly in this post-modern world. Moreover, it should be noted that such relevance is established by way of adjusting ministry approaches specifically to address those of the superseding generation so that there will be succession and success noted in the context of the ministry itself. This chapter is dedicated to the comprehensive research and collected results related to the project to support this hypothesis.

### **The Purpose of The Project**

The purpose of the project was to establish a ministry paradigm, which would improve the effectiveness of ministry through the integration of popular cultural trends that will maintain ministry relevance. The popular trend that will serve this project as a model for other emerging cultural trends and their potential integration into traditional ministry contexts will be Social Media - a 21st century popular trend.

### **The Project Objectives**

The following represents the intentions of this effort:

- To educate biblically the focus group as well as the wider congregation of the ministry context in the area of the utilization of popular cultural trends as a means of Christian ministry and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.
- To inspire the focus group as well as the wider congregation of the ministry context to utilize a popular cultural trend such as Social Media as a means of Christian witness.
- To lay the groundwork for future integration of popular cultural trends and their integration into the ministry context of the project.
- To ascertain feedback of the project to establish its effectiveness.

### **The Focus Group Overview**

The focus group consist of fifteen individuals who are members of the United Baptist Church of Baltimore, Maryland whom represent one of the following generational categories: The Silent Generation (born between 1925 and 1945), The Baby Boomer Generation or Generation X (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation Y (born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Z (born between 1980 and 2000). The participants of the focus group were be asked to share in worship services, sermons, and biblical teachings related to the project; and provide feedback by way of completing surveys as well as by taking part in interviews conducted by myself.

### **Biblical Teaching Overview**

The following is an overview of the biblical teaching shared during the project. The participants were instructed in: The Great Commission; the possibility of current trends having their genesis in biblical time; Instant Messaging; and in the utilization of



that which was existentially made for one purpose, but can also be incorporated for the purpose of the kingdom.

1. Making Ministry Matter: Relevance Over Religiosity (See Appendix A) presented as a biblical foundation Matthew 28:18-20, the Great Commission narrative. The participants learned in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ, it is necessary to make Jesus relevant to the intended audience. Moreover, the intention of the Great Commission was not to make religious people per se, but to "make disciples."
2. Instant Messaging: A Biblical Origin (See Appendix B) conveyed the proposition that present trends e.g. Instant Messaging may actually be an upgraded form of an innovative communicative medium noted in scripture. Using I Samuel 20:3-39 as a biblical foundation the participants were presented with the means by which Jonathan communicated to David using an arrow since the two of them were not in the same location. The purpose of the arrow was to inform David of what happened where Jonathan was, much like that of Instant Messaging in present times.
3. As Long As You Use It For Jesus (See Appendix C) is the third lesson shared with the focus group and the wider congregation of the United Baptist Church. The purpose of this instruction was to enlighten those who took part that what was made for one thing can indeed be used for a God-thing e.g. the fulfillment of the Great Commission. The biblical story of the woman with the alabaster jar taken from Mark 14:3-9 served as the biblical foundation for this lesson. The alabaster jar in the text was more than just a prop in the pericope, it actually the focus for relevance regarding the project. While it (the alabaster jar) was made for one purpose, the woman of the text used it for Jesus. And as a result Jesus came to her defense when she was criticized by others for doing what she did with the alabaster jar. Herein is the essence of the teaching: As long as you use it for Jesus, the Lord will support it.

### **The Collection of Data**

This is a qualitative ontological study whereas much of the focus given and data collected is a comprehensive work dedicated to observing objectively the introduction and integration of a popular cultural trend within a ministry context to determine whether there is, if any, impact upon Christian discipleship through the use of a popular trend as a

ministry tool. A qualitative data triangulation method incorporated the following sources: surveys, interviews, and journal postings related to Social Media usage.

### Major Findings One

Popular cultural trends derive their popularity from the generation, which the trend was socially introduced, implemented, and became an integral part of society. It is to this end that the trends relevance is not just cultural per se but generational to a large degree as well.

The first data exemplar comes from the results from the surveys I presented (See Appendix D). Survey I, which revealed on average 83% of twenty-four respondents agree Social Media should be used as an evangelism and discipleship tool, however only 50% agree that Social Media should be used during the actual worship service. Additionally to take note of those who agree that Social Media should be used during the actual worship service reveals generational disparity on the matter: 100% of Generation Y were in total agreement, followed by 80% of Generation X and only 35% of the Baby Boomers. The generation furthest removed from the popular trend generation/culture, which established the popularity of the trend, has the least interest, while the culture/generation that is proximal and responsible for the trends popularity embraces its use 100%. Notwithstanding, 100% of those surveyed believe Social Media should be used as a means of Christian ministry.

Results from Survey II yielded the following from thirty-three respondents taken from a random sampling of my ministry context. The survey revealed 88% of those surveyed believed the use of modern technology in the worship service would be beneficial to them. Moreover, 63% were in favor of adding popular cultural trends into

the stream of their traditional worship experience, but decidedly preferred so over and above the traditional worship experience. Additionally, 83% of the respondents desiring to include popular cultural trends in their worship experience were of Generation X.

From Survey III, data from a random sampling of sixty individuals indicated 77% of those surveyed have never posted on social media during a worship service. On average 65% do not see the use of social media as disrespectful, a disturbance during the church service, and/or as having no place in the church; 88% believe that social media can be used as a ministry medium to lead people to Jesus Christ.

The second data exemplar derives from in-depth interviews conducted with random members of my focus group (See Appendix E). One respondent of the Silent Generation when asked about the challenges and changes which may have occurred since this project attempted to incorporate social media into their ministry context replied, "I have been challenged and that's to the going forth with the new generation—trying to come on board with it. Not my faith, but just the technology piece of it. But my faith remains unchanged." On the other hand, a respondent from Generation Y stated, "But for me, it's been a tool for me to share my faith, so I've been doing it and maybe others but I haven't seen until now young people using it to share their faith as much." Another respondent representing Generation Z indicated their familiarity with and their present use of social media in the comment, "Beforehand it was more so, I could tell from—you know my Facebook experience and having my Facebook friends it was more so not basically used as a witnessing tool. It was more so used as my personal use; basically, my church life nothing to really do with that. And now since then it has become more helpful and I see it becoming more engaging tool for witnessing." However, a respondent from

Generation X summed it up by stating, "So as far as I'm concerned that was still your teaching coming into play. The Facebook page is definitely generational because from, I would dare say, thirty-five on down, that's their world, or that's how they communicate."

The third data exemplar is taken from participant statements shared as journal reflections (See Appendix F). One reflection offered:

I was 12 years old when Social Media was first introduced to me. To my generation it has been the best thing created beside a cell phone. Social Media was the new way to connect with new friends and catch up with old friends you may have lost touch with. It was also away for young people to address their feelings by creating a profile that expressed how you may feel and shared things about who you are. In my opinion parents didn't care for us using social media. Many young people looked at it as fun but I think parents looked at it as nothing but trouble.

Another reflection provided by an older participant shared this perspective:

I would be the first to say that I was not a fan of social media. Little did I know, what a tool it would become. It took me while to understand the importance of all the excitement surrounding Facebook, Twitter, blog and etc. I always felt the social media had too much power and control.

With the likes of Jeremy Scott, founder of the Viral Orchard, an Internet marketing firm stating "young people are more into social and digital media than older people, I'm completely shocked—the data suggests that the trend is even stronger than we previously thought."<sup>2</sup> And with researcher Angela Cross reporting "Generation Z is social media"<sup>3</sup> I would have to concur. And through the triangulation of my independent sources, using the above-stated first, second, and third data exemplars, I would say this major finding of a relationship that correlates the popular trend with the generation of its cultural genesis is supported.

## Major Findings Two

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<sup>2</sup>Digital Media Is Trouncing Traditional Media Among Generation Y Consumers <http://www.reelseo.com/digital-media-generation-y/#ixzz36WYGEOUQ>.

<sup>3</sup>I Media Connections, "What You Need To Know About Generation Z, <http://www.imediaconnection.com/content/27425.asp#multiview>.

This ministry context is not making optimum use of technology and as a result opportunities to minister to, make disciples of, as well as maintain the discipleship of the younger generation, particularly within the context of the researcher, have been passed up. To this end, this finding has brought about an awareness of the need to integrate the trends of technology for the benefit of ministry relevance specifically to the younger generation and the success and succession of the ministry.

The first data exemplar was taken from Survey IV (See Appendix D), which specifically centered on the fifteen focus group participants. Accordingly, eleven out of fifteen stated they do not believe that the United Baptist Church demonstrates an adequate approach toward making disciples of the younger generations. Moreover, only 13% strongly agree that the church makes adequate use of technology at all. Notwithstanding 80% of the focus group strongly agreed as well that technology is crucial to ministry relevance particularly to the younger generation. While conversely twelve out of fifteen did not strongly agree to the importance of technology in regards to the older generations e.g. those born between 1925 and 1963.

The second data exemplar came from in-depth interviews (See Appendix E). A Silent Generation participant implied the project presented progression in the ministry context with the following response to a question about the impact the teaching and preaching on the subject of social media and Social Media in general had upon them.

I believe that it has been useful, will continue to be useful because that's the way that we're going into. I don't to go back. I want to move forward. And I liked, uh, even if I'm at a slower pace, I like moving forward. Umm, I don't want our church to not be, umm, with the now generation.

Another interviewee from Generation X replied to a question about change with the following statement:

Well before United Baptist made a effort to try to get the congregation involved in social media, say two years ago, there was not much, in the way of our Facebook page responses, there was not much response in our Twitter account, and even as far as emailing outside of the officers of the church, wasn't a lot of communication in that sense. I feel that when you made a concerted effort to start really focusing on the subject of media and Social Media, I can see an improvement that's there....if we don't change and evolve we'll become extinct. This world in all it's aspects, I mean in the church aspect, even education system, everyone is communicating via Twitter, via Facebook, their upgrading all these different ways to do it electronically, so that's where we need to be to be effective as a ministry of United Baptist.

In addition, a participant from Generation Y provided this response indicating the reluctance, which the ministry context apparently demonstrated prior to being informed of Social Media and its potential kingdom benefit.

So I think now people seeing, and the teachings kind of opened our eyes to see that you know God gives us a variety of methods to make disciples, so I think the teachings have done that. They actually gone into the Word to see that we don't have to be in the box. We can use what is culturally - not acceptable, but culturally in demand, and how we can take that which is so popular and use it for kingdom impact.

The third data exemplar stems from excerpts of journal posts collected from random participants of the focus group (See Appendix F). The following statements reflect by way of inference how technology or social media was not a fully employed effort within the ministry context. Consequently, it is easy to deduce that without the intent of this project there would have been no change in my ministry context for the purpose of ministry relevance.

#### Excerpt One

The introduction and utilization of social media at United Baptist Church has expanded the way in which people can receive the blessings of God through preaching, teaching, and witnessing.

#### Excerpt Two

Several months ago, there was a shift in teaching and preaching in our church. The change involved the encouragement to use technology, specifically social media, to share our faith. This shift, of incorporating social media, has impacted the life of our church in two ways. A significant way this shift has impacted our church and made us more relevant is that we've become more connected and empowered to be a witness for Christ through social media. This shift has also,

intentionally, engaged younger members (youth and young adults) in the discipleship and evangelism ministries of the church.

### Excerpt Three

It took me while to understand the importance of all the excitement surrounding Facebook, Twitter, blog and etc. I always felt the social media had too much power and control. But as I began to understand why God allowed it to be, I could see and recognize the empowering tool that it is.

In his contribution to the book *The Relevant Church: A New Vision for*

*Communities of Faith* Alex McManus claims that the church must raise this question: "Is the church relevant to the future?"<sup>4</sup> The triangulation of my independent sources utilizing the above-stated first, second, and third data exemplars, indicate that the church should be a church relevant to the future. My ministry context cannot ignore the integration of a popular cultural trend like social media, otherwise according to the data, she will continue to underuse technology and miss optimum opportunities to reach and win the younger generation. To this end, the data supports this finding.

### Major Finding Three

The use of social media as a means of ministry is not just necessary for relevant ministry to the younger generation, but it is necessary to be a relevant ministry as a whole; indeed, to the entire demographic of the ministry context. However, it is equally critical for the ministry context to be educated biblically in matters of ministry relevance in order for the integration of popular cultural trends to commence. Herein, using the bible as a primary source of information and inspiration is essential to the buy-in of incorporating a popular trend as a ministry tool into a ministry context.

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<sup>4</sup>Alex McManus, *Is The Church Still Relevant?* The Relevant Church A New Vision for Communities of Faith (Lake Mary, FL: The Relevant Group, 2004), 13.

The first data exemplar of this finding derives from surveys presented (See Appendix D). The overwhelming majority of responses speak to the use of social media as a tool by which the Great Commission could be carried forth favorably. Nearly 70% when it comes to their social media community and/or connections, are not concerned as to whether or not the people who connect with them on a given social media network of theirs are Christian. This would suggest that this context, who although is aware of the benefit of the use of Social Media as a witnessing tool and a means to win others to a faith in Jesus Christ, the compulsion to witness and win others to Christ is not a primary concern to them. Herein, reveals the need to instruct and inspire those of this ministry context to know and engage in the spirit of the Great Commission having a burden for the lost—so much so, that whatever the community, whether cyber or not, there is an unappeasable quest for everyone connected to them to be saved.

The second data exemplar comes from a sampling of in-depth interviews with members of the focus group (See Appendix E). Noticeably there was a consensus that due to the teaching and preaching relative to the subject of social media and the scriptural underpinning for ministry relevance in general, a greater understanding led to excitement and engagement of social media use as a ministry tool. Throughout the re-examinations of each interview, the teaching and the emphasis of ministry relevance had a significant impact upon each participant. The comments revealed life-altering outcomes. For instance, one interviewee stated,

My perspective has changed in that now I know that God will use any and everything that man comes up with to use it for the glory of the kingdom. Umm, there was a time when I thought that it had no place in the church, but I've done a complete 180 on that thing. A complete 180, but that's how I thought. And now I did a 180 because now I know my Lord will use anything [to find to feed or maintain His flock so that's just one of the things He uses.



Another participant shared,

I'm more intentional. I am very intentional about what I post on social media. You know it's social media so some of the things that people post on there are just about your everyday life but one of the things that I've tried to intentional do with social media is let people know that being a Christian isn't all about being in church. And so I'm very intentional about things that I share. And so of late I've been showing that Christians do have fun - that God want us to live an abundant life, and part of that is to enjoy the life that we have. And so, people need to see images of Christians having fun along with those nuggets of scripture and those encouraging, inspiring words that come from faith or those post that we post from the message that we hear on a Sunday morning or a prayer call that we get on during the week but its—they need to see a Christian's life—the total life, not just the Sunday morning type of life. And so I think for me the teachings have been helpful because they've been very - not just biblical, but they're life. It's about life. So it's taken the scripture because - you know Jesus didn't say use Social Media to spread the gospel, but the teachings have been so relevant and so complimentary to everyday life experiences. So I think for me it's really enhanced the way or helped me to me more intentional about what I share on Social Media.

The youngest respondent whom recalled the teaching and emphasis on social media as a ministry tool said, "I do have a different perspective on it now since then. It's becoming, like I said, it's becoming more a helpful tool." And continued with this response regarding the teaching:

And I think it benefitted the youth in a major way because it showed them that Hey I can find a way to witness to my friends other then just coming up and starting a conversation about Jesus. I can just put something about what's going on in church and what my pastor's preaching about and that's a way to them showing them that hey I'm a part of this Christian faith and I believe in Jesus Christ.

The third data exemplar is taken from excerpts of journal statements provided by individuals who were a part of the focus group (See Appendix F). The following comes from a Generation Z participant:

I have been so blessed to witness some life changing messages. Since these messages I have not only seen my perspective change on Social Median but have experienced seeing more youth and adult within our church using social media for more spiritual uses then personal.

And from an individual who represents the Silent Generation comes the following excerpt:

But as I began to understand why God allowed it to be, I could see and recognize the empowering tool that it is. I myself am now using my phone for things other than making calls. I've downloaded apps such as the Navigation and Google. I even downloaded a Bible on my phone. It's really easy to carry. I now see the many souls that can be reached through the social media

Moreover, the following is an excerpt from a statement provided from a focus group participant who represented the Generation X demographic:

Pastor Solomon has made an effort to involve United Baptist Church in the use of Social Media. Speaking for myself, I was very hesitant to want to involve myself with Facebook or Twitter: my thinking being that these tools were only for the 'young people' and that they had no real place in the Ministry of spreading the gospel and life saving message of salvation through Jesus Christ. How wrong I was! After getting over the fear of learning (and still learning) how to properly use these tools. I can personally attest to the fact that they DO belong part of a Church's outreach and everyday communication.

As a result of the teaching, preaching and emphasis on the subject of ministry relevance one of the take-a-ways from those interviewed and is that ministry methodology is subject to the Sovereignty of God as the scriptures indicate. And so, if there is a means by which God designates to either make disciples of Christ or maintain the spiritual growth of Christians that just so happens to have gained its popularity first outside of the church context as a social trend, does not mean it cannot be used positively and for the benefit of the kingdom of God. Therefore, the above examination of first, second, and third data exemplars substantiates this finding.

#### Major Finding Four

Alternative uses were not initially intended for church and/or Christian ministry purposes can be implemented for and become a part of Christian ministry. The first data exemplar derives from survey information received from surveys conducted among the ministry context (See Appendix D).

From sixty-six participants 83% of those surveyed, people can be led to a faith in Jesus Christ just by using social media. In addition when asked what do you believe are the benefits to use social media as it relates to sharing the gospel message, the comments listed are a sampling of responses provided.

- Reaching the “unchurched/unsaved.
- Social media is a fantastic vehicle for sharing the gospel message. Just imagine all the people you can reach who want and need to hear the gospel.
- It encourages followers to seek out worship at various worship service of interest.
- Getting inspirational messages from friends that encourage me, and most of the time its what I really needed at that time. Just a good word.
- The use of social media is an awesome medium to share the gospel. The Internet is global. A cd message does not have the same reach as the Internet. Social media is a tool that, if used intentionally can support the church in fulfilling the great commission and taking the church outside the building to impact the world.
- Helping someone that doesn't know Christ get to know Him. Someone might need what you have to shard to renew their faith in GOD.
- Because people who are looking for a church to come to would have an idea how your church is. I even record and post some of the service on my page so they can get a taste.
- Using social media related to sharing the gospel can be a positive tool when appropriate.
- Winning souls to Christ.

From another survey conducted with thirty-three participants responding the following was offered:

- 87% of the individuals surveyed agree Social Media should be used as a Christian ministry.
- 87% of the individuals surveyed agree Social Media should be used as an evangelistic tool.
- 91% of the individuals surveyed agree Social Media should be used as a discipleship tool.

The second data exemplar comes from in-depth interviews conducted with participants of the focus group (See Appendix E). When asked, "Do you think Social

Media can be effectively used to reach others either to make new disciples or to maintain discipleship?" A participant representing the Silent Generation stated, "I think it's one of the best things going right now to reach the masses." Another participant from Generation X commented, "Yes Sir I do. My answer would be yes to that on both." While from Generation Y an individual simply shared, "Absolutely. Absolutely." Representing the youngest generation, Generation Z a participant said, "Yes. I think it's an awesome tool. I think it reaches the ones who are a part of all the Christian faith now and the ones who are not."

The third data exemplar comes from excerpts of statements provided by focus group participants. One individual shared,

The use of social media is not new to the Body of Christ; however, the cross-over effect or duality of the technology can be intentional in winning souls to Christ. The introduction and utilization of social media at United Baptist Church has expanded the way in which people can receive the blessings of God through preaching, teaching, and witnessing. The accessibility has no limits.

Another wrote,

I believe teaching and preaching to the "Glory Of God" can be relevant through social media. This is another way of winning lost souls to Christ.

One more offered,

Knowing technology is on the rise and the younger generation is so in tune to social media I think it would be a very effective way for reaching out to the youth that don't attend a church. We must use every source there is to teach and preach the word of God. Bibles are being downloaded sermons are being recorded by cell phones we have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram just to name a few and we as superior to these young people should educate ourselves and learn to speak the language of this new generation. With all the technology coming up daily there should be no excuse for anyone young or old to say they have not heard the word of God.

Given consideration to the triangulation of the aforementioned first, second and third data exemplars taken from three independent sources, this finding is supported. Social Media, which represents a popular cultural trend, and which was introduced initially to the general culture without intention of being used within the context of Christian ministry, according to participants in this project, can just as well be used for the purpose

of a witness of the Christian faith; albeit to evangelize and to make disciples, even as the Great Commission calls believers to do.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter will provide a summarization of the project, share reflections of the researcher, state conclusions, and offer recommendations for further study that should be centered on this effort. Herein, the following is a representation of the project's outcome.

#### **Summary Of The Project**

The pursuit of establishing an ongoing ministry endeavor whereas the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of his Great Commission would go forth via the integration of popular cultural trends into what has been heretofore traditional modalities of ministry all came to be as the result of a compelling revelation that could not ignore prior to the project. The observation of both my spiritual autobiography and my ministry context revealed a problem with remaining relevant to insure not only success, but also successful succession. This problem centered principally on remaining relevant, is what gave birth to the project; as I noted from this discovery the need for Christian ministry to be a relevant ministry in order to be a successful ministry; one that is continually engaged in honoring the Great Commission. To this end, there is a correlation between popular cultural trends, generations, and successful succession of Christian ministry, particularly in the local church context of ministry, which is called required relevance. This project in essence serves as a pilot program exploring the incorporation of a popular cultural trend or social media into my ministry context as an

effort to address the aforementioned theory and by conclusion induce how critical the adoption of popular cultural trends in general are for the purpose of ministry relevance and successful succession of Christian ministry.

The United Baptist Church of East Baltimore, Maryland was founded in 1922 and since its incorporation; there have been four individuals who have served as the church's pastor. All but one of the pastors took their charge of the church beyond the age of forty. Only the current pastor was called while yet in his twenties. And while having the distinction of being the youngest pastor elected by the congregation, challenges were encountered based upon the juxtaposition of his age to the culture of the church, which his predecessor cultivated over forty-one year tenure. To this end, the church, which the present pastor inherited, was a congregation that was for the most part in a generational class beyond his.

The generational differences became obvious in the approach to Christian ministry as the congregation enjoyed business as unusual or better stated, what had become their traditional manner of worship, and Christian service continued without the expectation of change even though the pastoral leadership had changed and reflected/represented a much younger generation. The order of service, the song selections, and leadership in and of itself remained relatively the same; with each ensuing year, the gap widened in regards to the membership demographic. The older generation, or if you will, the inherited church, pretty much stayed the course, while the younger generation seemed to either jump ship or not even get on board. At issue was a matter of relevance. The church did not upgrade its approach to ministry as other churches were doing locally and nationwide. Technology was finding its way into various ministries as

their means of modernizing and becoming relevant and reaching, let alone, winning a younger demographic. United Baptist Church however was not listed among them and as a ministry lagged behind those ministries that did. It became apparent to me that unless steps were made to intentionally make adjustments to the ministry's approach to ministry and become more relevant, the church would continue on, however it would only do so without any succession of generations albeit those younger in age and/or even younger in faith.

Technology, and in particular, social media had become the cultural craze during the current pastors leadership. Indeed, given the past twenty-years there have been technological advancements e.g. cell phones, computers, and most significantly social media, which have altered society significantly. Those whom the church would bring the witness of Christ to (popular culture) were not only a part of this changing world, but their buy-in was tremendous. Before long social media mediums like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, just to name a few, that reflected the advancements in technology and technological reach, had become dominant aspects of the American and some may even say global culture. Without an effort to incorporate such into the stream of the church's ministry could further the gap regarding the church's sense of cultural relevance.

Therefore, the project was proposed to which the United Baptist Church would undergo a pilot effort inclusive of the requisite biblical instruction for information and foundation, biblical preaching for inspiration, and data collection for evaluation and follow through.

The United Baptist Church served as the ministry context for the project with random samplings of its general membership as well as a selected focus group of fifteen individuals serving as project participants. Initially a sampling of the congregation were



given a survey by way of a hard copy handout that was used to determine a matter of Internet use and specifically the utilization of Social Media among the congregants. All the same, the survey also disclosed a soteriological concern to me, which confirmed even more how critical the introductory lesson of the project would be.

A Bible study was conducted to enlighten the participants of the study in the basics of the Great Commission. As information from the aforementioned survey revealed, a nonchalant level of concern by the project participants particularly when it came to whether those who followed or friended and/or were otherwise connected to them on their social media networks were Christian or not actually did not matter to them at all. To this end, this teaching moment became essential to this effort. After all, the Great Commission and its aim to convert individuals to the Christian faith as well as perpetuate such proselytization by way of its teaching of the Christ mission obviously is intended to spark a passion and desire in believers for others to become Christians. It was imperative for the Great Commission narrative to serve as the foremost foundational and fundamental lesson in this project.

In addition, the teaching of the Great Commission was compulsory because it underpins the necessity of relevance as well. In order to make disciples-the intent of the lesson-relevance is requisite to the witness that must be given to do so. Individuals who are the intended recipients of the gospel message of Christ must be able to relate to the story, the significance, and so forth of the Savior. Herein, those bearing witness have to be able to mold the message of the Christ and modify it through personal accounts of faith and post-modern, new millennium parables so that there is a measure of reasonableness to winning the lost through their ability to relate.

Two additional surveys were presented via hard copy handouts on two separate occasions. These surveys were to ascertain information regarding more specifically the use of technology and social media as a ministry tool within the present context of the ministry. Individuals were asked in general whether social media had a place in and during the worship experience. While many people agreed to the overall benefits of technology and social media, the actual use of it in and during an actual church worship service did not receive the same consensus of agreement. In turn, three instructional periods went forth:

1. A lesson was taught on the subject of technology and Social Media and the various devices and uses associated with Social Media. This was conducted by an individual who was well-versed on the subject.
2. A lesson was taught on the possibility of social media e.g. the ability to correspond instantly with another party who is not in the same location or event and share information, the news, and/or report on what either happened and/or was happening to those who were not there, could have originated in biblical times. This lessons objective was to cause the participants to identify their devices of the present age with instruments used in biblical times so that the perception of modern day social media as something innovative and apart from any act in the bible could be cleared up and corrected to the degree whereas individuals would actually see a correlation between then and now.
3. A lesson was taught on the subject of using what was intended for one thing in popular culture for the purpose of the kingdom of God. This lessons aim was to enlightened the participants in matters of what is practical and applicable for the kingdom of God and at the same time discourage participants from prejudging what is acceptable and what is not when it comes to its incorporation into the albeit the worship and witness of Christians.

Several preaching opportunities were used to inspire the congregation to consider and commence both ministry adjustments and ministry adaptation for the sake of honoring what God has called believers to do in the Great Commission. The gospel message brought to the attention of the congregation the need for intentionality towards

reaching and winning specific generational groups by ministering through what was relevant to those said groups respectively. Moreover, the messages were to undergird, empower, and prepare the participants for change through the impact of the preached Word. Using such pericopes and preachments as Exodus 3:1-6 (God Is Doing A New Thing In The Same Place), Joshua 5:2-12 (It Cost To Keep Moving), Luke 24:50-53, Acts 2:1-21 and 41 (God Is Still Moving), Acts 9:10-19 (Ministering To The Misunderstood) and Acts 1:1-8 (Being His Witnesses) an attitude and atmosphere was sought within the context of my ministry environment whereas our efforts would be consistent with the will and desire of God—specifically, the Great Commission (See Appendices G, H, I, J, and K).

Another survey was presented without the hardcopy handout method and utilized the Internet to acquire my information from the participants. The responsiveness to my request and the computation of my results were much more immediate than prior surveys. This survey served several purposes, which were

- a) To see how every generation represented and reflected (using those of the focus group as a representation) in this project would respond to a more modern approach given how recently they were presented survey's in a relatively antiquated fashion i.e. hard copy handouts,
- b) To present the usefulness of technology to the participants from the context of the church in which they are a part and
- c) To acquire information to see what perspective the participants had on the use of technology in regards to its generational applications and effectiveness.

Interviews were conducted with a random sampling of the focus group participants—one person from each generational class represented. Through the interview, engagement occurred in a question and answer moment, and conversation with the participants providing helpful feedback. Each of the respondents not only willingly

participated but also did so with noticeable excitement. They appreciated taking part in the project based on their enthusiasm and answers that. In addition, every respondent noted that personal changes were made in their lives due to the teaching and preaching and the overall emphasis of relevance and social media use as a part of their Christian faith and praxis. Whether it was the use of technology for devotions, reading scriptures, posting on social media, the participants of the interviews expressed that technology has become a greater part of their life and even more so their faith walk.

Finally, journal statements were collected and reviewed which focus group members provided. This information served to further substantiate what, if any, impact the project had by drawing a comparison between the project's outset and the projects end, noting whatever factors of the projects evolution played a role, again if any, in their conclusions.

### **Reflections And Lessons Learned**

New York Times best selling author Seth Godin wrote in his book entitled *Tribes*, "If you're not uncomfortable in your work as a leader, it's almost certain you're not reaching your potential as a leader." He goes on to say, "Leading someone toward giving up one worldview and embracing yours isn't easy and it is not always comfortable."<sup>1</sup> Godin has a point. Reflecting on this project revealed that I was not only birthed from an epiphany but it also provided epiphanies throughout, especially regarding how significant it is for the leader to have his or her finger on the pulse of popular culture. Even more so, it is important that the church embraces popular culture and integrates it into her life and mission. To this end, where there have been albeit core, cultural, and consistent practices

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<sup>1</sup>Seth Godin, *Tribes We Need You To Lead Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: Penguin Group, 2008), 55-56.

within the context of the church, endeavoring to encourage and evoke change can in the words of Godin, not always be comfortable.

I am proud to be the pastor of the United Baptist Church. All the same, I have come to realize that I am the pastor of a, equally if not even more so, people who are proud of the family, friends, and fellowship they have forged over the years all under the banner of the United Baptist Church prior to my arrival and charge. With that said, I have noted that with such pride comes the perception of adequacy.

Unfortunately, the church community in general begun to expand beyond the corners in which many of the Baltimore City churches were situated, including the United Baptist Church. Whereas technology and media were being incorporated into ministries and used as means to convey to others that the ministry was not dated, but up to date. While the membership of the United Baptist Church may have adequately met the expectations of those governing and sustaining the manner in which they perceived ministry should go forth and faith should be practiced for years on end; the world beyond the walls of the United Baptist Church was creating expectations of the church or the Christian community at large in regards to her modernizing, modifying, becoming widely relational and more relevant; and definitely less recalcitrant to popular culture and less rigid concerning the potential in assimilating that which appeals to popular culture as a possible means of church ministry. When society as a whole reveals its interests, the church must counter in some fashion just the same to establish an interest from the society as a whole as well. Passages from my Old Testament biblical foundation—(Ex 3:2-3) where Moses became attracted to a bush that may not have ever gotten his attention before, but indeed does get his attention in Exodus 3:3, all because God decided

to do something different—have served as a means for me to be unequivocal about this project and certain that the church likewise has to do something different to create an appeal as well to the wider population that's beyond its present membership. The United Baptist Church may have adequately maintained ministry, but without a mindset on modernizing and modifying her ministry approach the church risked not only lagging significantly behind, but also losing its influence on generations who would make up the successors of the ministry.

As the leader I had to accept whatever uncomfortable aspects were going to come along with this endeavor: and they did come. Chief of which was an admission about leadership, not solely one based on an assessment of church leaders other than myself, but myself included. The tier and temperament of the leadership upon my reflection was representative of the problem. As I recall a meeting that was held during this research project, a question arose about a date of a scheduled event. This led everyone at the meeting to quickly refer to their calendars. While everyone at the meeting had in their possession either a smart phone or an electronic tablet with easy access to calendars through the technological applications on them, I watched as an individual pulled from their pocket a printed calendar book with a rubber band wrapped around it. As that person unraveled the rubber band and opened the calendar book, I said to myself, "The technology is right there, but it's being ignored. Old habits are hard to break." And the individual who much to their unawares by their actions assisted me in that revelation happened to be a highly visible leader in the church. Here was a leader in the church who did not take advantage of the technological tools right before them. What was this saying? And what was this saying about my leadership as well?

The more I gave thought to the above-stated meeting I had to take into consideration that persons' tenure at the church juxtaposed to mine. I had to consider the persons' generational class as opposed to mine. I had to consider that individuals stage in life in relation to mine. Lastly, I had to consider and compare what was our respected vision of ministry between the two of us? Now while I could not alter their generation, their time at the church or their stage in life, I did have a role in perception of ministry, in vision, and in leadership in general. And so, as I reflect upon the project I have to bear witness of this uncomfortable yet necessary moment which affirmed more than just the necessity of the project, it also made me aware of the revelation about a church itself that can come from little unintentional habits, knee-jerk behaviors, and the like demonstrated by leadership. As a result, I realize how critical the impact can be upon a church when it is merely maintaining what is routine. In order to counter routines that reflect the dated and not the up-to-date, the leader has to consistently cast and effectively communicate vision that encourages relevant ministry.

Ron Martoia, author of *Morph!* raises the question, "If we don't have leaders thinking out of the box and cultivating teams that think out of the box, who will engage people in multi-sensory and interactive ways?"<sup>2</sup> Leadership leading by both example and excitement is essential to fluid change within the church context.

With further reflection, I arrived at the understanding that popular culture trends apparently gain their popularity initially through a specific generational context. Educator Marc Prensky, who is perhaps best known for introducing the expressions Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants is on point with this innovative nomenclature. In the attempt to infuse the popular trend, particularly social media into the ministry context of the United

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<sup>2</sup>Ron Maroia, *Morph!* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2005), 142.

Baptist Church, it was necessary to teach about the subject of social media. However, I have discovered that the instruction was to a degree nonessential and redundant to those whom Prensky would describe as digital natives. Accordingly the categorical distinction between digital natives and digital immigrants is this: The digital native is represented by the younger generation who what Prensky says, "are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet."<sup>3</sup> Conversely, the digital immigrants "are like all immigrants, some better than others—to adapt to their environment, they always retain, to some degree, their accent, that is, their foot in the past."<sup>4</sup> Those who really benefitted from the instruction regarding social media were those of the older generation for whom technology was never their native language. Moreover, conveying the importance to learn about and to incorporate social media as a part of ones everyday life was all the more challenging to do with the older generation because their footing was still firmly planted in the past. The young generation, the digital natives, on the other hand were already familiar with social media and the if truth were told they could have very well taught the class on technology and social media as opposed to being invited to being taught on the topic.

What I gathered from the correlation between popular trends and generational context became another uncomfortable but necessary lesson learned. Uncomfortable because I arrived at the understanding upon my reflection of the project instead of during the project; and what I gained was this: The popular trend that is the topic and tool that a ministry is attempting to transition into its ministry context should be presented and

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<sup>3</sup>Digital Natives Digital Immigrants, Marc Prensky, 2001, marcprensky.com.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



promoted by the generation for whom it is their trend, indeed their language, indeed, a part of their popular culture. The younger generations should have been encouraged and empowered to take the lead in leading the congregation and in particularly the older generation in the teaching of Social Media. By doing so, I believe the benefit would have been cross-generational and the vision of integrating Social Media as a ministry tool would have been casted to and caught on by a much larger audience then to those to whom the subject matter of Social Media were not as familiar with in the first place.

The integration of the popular cultural trend as a ministry tool requires the involvement of the popular culture itself. This demographic (the popular culture that identifies mostly with the popular trend) should be identified within the church context who is seeking to incorporate a popular cultural trend as a form of ministry relevance. By doing so, the effort begins with those whom it was intended for no matter how small that initial number is; and as such, it becomes an endeavor that launches from a fulcrum of relevance that becomes the feeder to the wider congregation.

Technology itself is one thing, however, the speed by which it advances into the next new technological trend is another. According to The Emerging Future (TEF) who specializes in examining and forecasting the trajectory of technology and the paradigm shifts it will create, states, "Changes in everything will be coming so fast that you will not be able to keep up."<sup>5</sup> In fact, according to TEF "in seven years, technology will have improved one million times since the year 2000."<sup>6</sup> This is an incredible pace for institutions that are already behind to stay in step with. As I continue to reflect upon this project I have to note should trends follow the course of technology, it will be imperative

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<sup>5</sup>theaging emergingfuture.com

<sup>6</sup>Ibid

for the ministry who seeks to integrate its use within its ministry context to do so at the outset of its trending.

Social media alone has exponentially expanded. The likes of Facebook has spawned new ideas in social media streams. Just ten years ago, there was no Twitter or Instagram on the scene. Within a decades time billions of people have logged in and logged on and have made Twitter and Instagram credible trends in social media. This is just an indication of how quickly a new trend via technology and specifically the Internet can set forth a cultural paradigm shift.

I realize that this project sought to inform the congregation about the use and benefit of Social Media as a means of ministry. Moreover, I am mindful of the fact that since the inception of this endeavor new Apps and new means to connect *cyberly* for the sake of staying connected socially have entered into the mainstream of our society. This effort was introduced as a pilot program that would serve as a paradigm for the integration of the popular trend into the ministry context, which needs to be modified for the sake of becoming a relevant and meaningful witness.

A final reflection offers how necessary it is to not loose sight of the spiritual nature of the project. This insight comes as a result of identifiable technological and misional challenges encountered throughout the course of this work, which I assert were the visible manifestations of spiritual warfare against an effort whereas the intention was to further promote and advance the kingdom of God. Such spiritual warfare is not a new experience or an undocumented one as we read about principalities and powers, rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness as the realities in which the Apostle Paul sought to warn his audience through Ephesians 6:12. In addition the Apostle addressed a war that

was neither in the flesh or carnal in 2 Corinthians 10:4. Unseen but yet real entities I admit are a matter of faith and depending upon an individual's faith, they become a matter of fact. Such is the case as I see it regarding this effort to honor the Great Commission through the use of technology and Social Media, or in short: through making the ministry of Jesus Christ relevant in order to cause ministry to succeed through succession and perpetuation.

It is because of the aforementioned that I would encourage anyone who endeavors to embark upon a work in which the objective is to fulfill Christ's mission to know full well that such an endeavor will come with an opposing reality, which manifests its mission through subtle strategic acts against your mission. The more I reflect upon the project the more discernible the spiritual warfare against the project becomes. While its aim may be to discourage, dissuade, and ultimately deny the projects success—those who are convicted and compelled to do relevant ministry should simply see such activity as acts that confirm that you are about a good and Godly work.

### **Conclusions**

The United Baptist Church was fortunate to serve as the pilot church for this project. Given the ministry context and its demographic prior to the teaching, preaching and over all emphasis of ministry relevance, the church was ideal for such an experiment. The membership, the leadership, and what was regarded as important all revealed the fact that upgrading and updating ministry resources for the sake of becoming and remaining a relevant ministry was not a priority, if at all, even necessary prior to this project. I have discovered though that with intentional teaching, consistent preaching, and establishing a

biblical case for ministry relevance can make all the difference in the membership's outlook even in the type of ministry context that is stated above.

Based upon the disparities that the surveys revealed e.g. juxtaposing the ministry context prior to the survey's, noting the status quo of the ministry was to stay the course in which it was on, to follow the religious routines of its worship experience without any consideration to really modernizing the ministry—and comparing that portrait to the one in which the responses to the surveys reveal of a congregation within that ministry context who shared in overwhelming agreement to the use of and belief in the Internet and Social Media as a beneficial ministry tool. Although separate surveys exposed a high percentage of individuals polled saw the potential of the use of Social Media as an effective ministry tool for evangelism and discipleship the context of ministry hardly revealed the same sentiment when the attention was given to all the non-modifying action that preceded the survey. I would suggest based upon this information that popular culture trends are not in the stream of certain ministry situations not because members of church ministries are unfamiliar with them and/or are arbitrarily standing against them and their use within their ministry context: I would suggest that as in the case of my ministry context, they just need to be informed and inspired from the Word of God that not only can popular trends be used, but they will be useful for fulfilling the mission of Christ.

When several participants shared with me the bible teaching enlightened them i.e. the correlation that was made with Instant Messaging of today and the arrow Jonathan shot to send a message to David as recorded in the bible (1 Sm 20:20-39) and when participants—both young and old, either opened Social Media accounts i.e. Twitter

and/or added me to the list of people they followed through Twitter, and I noted how their aspects of their worship experience had begun to be shared through social media: I determined the project had significant impact. Beforehand and as reported through the surveys, there were those who did not either use social media, did not use social media as a means of Christian witness, and/or did not use Social Media during worship or to share about their worship experience. However, after having shared in settings of teaching that was modeled after Jesus' parabolic pedagogical method—presenting correlations with the Word and our everyday life—the participants evidently had a new perspective about the need and the use of social media. A microcosm of the membership—representing the ministry community and ministry culture of the United Baptist Church's ministry context—took it upon themselves following albeit it a moment of instruction through a bible study or a moment of inspiration through a sermon to make use of social media. This is indicative of a change in the ministry community and the ministry culture.

While the older population of the church represented through a just a sampling of individuals is demonstrating their apprenticeship relative to the application of Social Media as an aspect of their lives, the younger population of the church represented as well by a sampling of individuals is demonstrating their discipleship digitally—using social media to share their with those connected to them via Social Media of meaning moments to them from the worship service. To this end, a cross-generational impact has taken place as a result of this project. This is another indication of a change in the ministry community and ministry culture of the Unite Baptist Church.

I conclude the thesis of this project has been proven. Relevance and not religious practice addresses the wider population of our society and those within our ministry

context. Moreover, through relevance—the teaching of relevance, the preaching of relevance and the intentional emphasis of relevance; and through relatable presentations to the participants in bible studies and worship settings—people will begin to engage more so in that which is relevant than that which is merely religious. Relevance establishes confidence and confidence leads to a willingness to share in like relevant fashion. As the Jesus motif shows us: we model what we are mentored. In his case, the intention was for his disciples to take it to another whole other level. Jesus did not only involve them, instruct them, and inspire them, but he wanted his disciples to exceed at what he had prepared them for. Jesus told his disciples "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater than these..."<sup>7</sup> The buy-in started with a faith in Jesus. Notwithstanding ongoing relevant teaching, mentoring, and disciple-making was to result in excelling in matters where faith in Jesus was the provenance to it all.

Herein, was the aim of this project: to enlighten individuals on the subject of relevance, to inspire individuals to become more engaged in that which makes ministry relevant, and to insure that those who make-up the up and coming and next generation, who will keep the ministry going, are indeed involved. The project achieved the above-mentioned.

I contend: Beginning with a perspective shift among the ministry's community and culture, a paradigm shift will follow and be reflected in the wider ministry context. This project has not only set the stage for such a shift to take place, but it has, in fact, began making preliminary moves that indicate the shift is underway. In addition, this project was to lay the groundwork for the integration of popular cultural paradigm shifts

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<sup>7</sup>Jn 14:12.

into the ministry context of local churches. I used Social Media as a test; it was representative of popular cultural paradigm shifts in general. To this end, this model offers a means to address, adjust, and adapt ministries accordingly whose aim is to become more relevant through the incorporation of a popular trend into the context of the ministry's witness.

### **Recommendations Going Forward**

The purpose of this project was to do more than just bring to the attention of my church congregation the subject of Social Media, it was to establish a fundamental model for ministries that desire to become more relevant through the integration of a popular trend into the context of their traditional church ministry operations. To this end, this project was designed to reduce the reluctance associated with relevance that is often influenced by the concern of becoming irreverent in the process, and in turn affecting the church's reputation in an egregious way, because for some relevant is worldly and not godly. This project was intended to reduce this apprehension and reassure participants the integration of relevant trends is theological, Christological, soteriological, ontological, sociological, and therefore in a word: purposeful. My attempt was to set forth a practical paradigm for popular trends to become a part of a church's ministry approach to fulfill the Great Commission through intentional relevance. Relevance and not religion is at the center of this project.

In addition, this work was to show that regardless of a given ministry context, modernizing and modifying the ministry approach is possible and will prove to generate more involvement from more of the congregation, if the effort is done with intention. Herein, the possibilities are endless with a project of this nature. As long as trends are

introduced to the wider world, the means to minister to the world will in kind become vast and varied.

Like with any pilot program discoveries are made, which enlighten researchers responsible for overseeing and evaluating the programs in such a way that revisiting and revising the methodologies associated with the program is almost inevitable. Going forward there are a few things that should be revisited and revised.

I would encourage those who want to make their ministry more relevant to do their research and determine the particular trend in which they would like to integrate into the context of their ministry. By doing this, the effort is not just an idea; it is an informed decision and determination for the direction of the ministry. Every trend is not necessarily the essential trend to incorporate into a ministry program. Thought should be given, prayer should be offered, spiritual direction should be sought, and a sense of God's call to the work should be confirmed. Given that this is a spiritual endeavor, those embarking upon it should have the utmost spiritual conviction to proceed with it. Identifying the specific trend by way of information and prayerful revelation will provide the initial clarity needed and the inspiration to continue as challenges arise.

1. I would involve the leadership intentionally at the outset. In this project, the leadership of my ministry context was a part of the general congregation for data purposes. The project was introduced to them as it was introduced to the congregation. Moving forward this is a part of my approach that I would revise. The leadership should be informed and inspired to the degree that the vision and the passion for the project is recognized, received, and projected by them. Regardless of any precipitating factors, which may come into play and encourage the exclusion of leaders, it is important to see the leadership as the initial focus group of the project. That said: the leadership should not just be informed about the project, but invited to share in the process throughout.
2. I would identify the specific generation that is most familiar with the trend in which I am seeking to incorporate as a ministry means of becoming more relevant. Identifying this generation I believe is essential. As with Prensky's



designation of Digital Natives so goes the same theoretical application to generations most familiar with what is trending. Whichever group within the church is most familiar with the trend, should be project consultants, instructors, and the like. I believe moving forward encouraging their involvement and how integral they are to the project will establish at the outset of the project an initial buy-in to the effort from within the congregation.

3. In the case of this project technology and Social Media by in large is something that the younger demographic identified with. However, moving forward thought should be given to whether it is a specific generation in which the ministry may have determined is not being reached and therefore in turn needs to modify their ministry approach accordingly for the sake of becoming more relevant to that generation. In the course of this project generational groups were determined, however it was not determined what would have been the trend of relevance to, for instance, the older generation of my ministry context. I believe the target generation or targeting a generation aids in identifying the adjustment(s) needed to be made to make the ministry a ministry of relevance.
4. I would establish an evaluative discipleship and evangelistic component. Since the aim of any ministry technique or tool is to have some part and/or role in the fulfillment of the Great Commission, there should be incorporated into the program a means to determine its impact regarding evangelism and discipleship. The church does not need another program just for program sake. On the contrary, programs should have a practical role in the mission of Christ. It is with this in mind, that moving forward I would include in the program a means to measure its effectiveness as a ministry effort that is indeed furthering the cause of Christ and expanding the kingdom of God.

**APPENDIX A**  
**MAKING MINISTRY MATTER: RELEVANCE OVER RELIGION**

## APPENDIX A

### MAKING MINISTRY MATTER: RELEVANCE OVER RELIGION

What is the aim of the church? The aim of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The three years that Jesus spent with his disciples and among others performing miracles and teaching about the kingdom and correcting laden beliefs was all to arrive at the aim of the church: The Great Commission.

The aim of the church, according to the Great Commission, is to:

1. Make disciples
2. Baptize new believers
3. Teach for the purpose of continuity of faith and kingdom growth

The church should not present a religious message or a message that emphasizes religion. The church must rather present a relevant message and a message that promotes relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

- Religious deals with following rules
- Relevance implies relationship e.g. one can relate
- The church cannot "make disciples" without making Christ relevant.
- Jesus Christ must be "one others can relate to."
- Remember the mission of the church is not to emphasize and/or enforce the rules as much as it is to see to it that people can relate to God.

Every generation has their thing. What it is that they relate to.

- My grandparents are and parents are of one generation - The Silent Generation (1925-1945)
- I am of another generation - Generation X The Baby Boomers (1946-1964)
- Millennials, Generation Y - (1965-1979)
- My daughter is of another generation. - The New Silent Generation, Generation Z (1980-2000)

The other week I made references to a style of dress - bellbottoms and platform shoes and there is a generation who perhaps said, "That was before my time." The same can be said of typewriters and rotary phones, pagers, tube televisions, and more. Every generation has their thing. And the current generation has theirs: Social Media.

Social Media has become the means of communicating via technology in this century. People are informed and connected through the medium of Social Media at like know other stage of history. Regardless of geographic's or demographics the world has become flat by way of Social Media, according to Thomas Friedman, a former golf caddy, and now a columnist for The New York Times. According to his book *The World Is Flat: A*

*Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* Friedman basically makes the claim that through our technological modernization and globalization, the playing field has become leveled and therefore the world has become flat.

Unfortunately, there are still those who are not recognizing nor taking advantage of the leveling of the playing field, and as such they are lagging behind. And even graver still lethargy has crept into their scenario and has become the reason they may struggle so as it relates to the success of their mission.

Technology and Social Media are the most relevant tools of this age and if the church does not incorporate and integrate these tools she will lack relevance and the result will be a lethargic institution unsuccessful in her mission - the Great Commission.

Nowadays - through the blessing of technology, God has leveled the field and has allowed us to globally and literally do the work, the very charge of the disciples in Mathew 28 - "make disciples of all nations" and Acts 1:8 "be my witnesses ...to the utmost parts of the world" with the ease of pressing buttons on our devices.

The world does not want to know how religious we are but how relevant? Can we make the connection with them? With Jesus as are paradigm, we note his time on earth was not to create the most religious people ever, but to show through his very being that God relates to people, and therefore - we who follow Christ should do our part to show others that God relates to them - even if it means, we must use their tools to get the message across.

#### 1. Social Media was intended for connecting people

When Social Media begun to enter the stream of our culture with the first email in 1971, when Geocities brought websites to our world in the 1990's and chats and Myspace followed, and Facebook thereafter, it was all for the purpose of people connecting.

#### 2. God intended our connection to people to be a good thing

When God created the world and inevitably man, the bible says that when it came to man, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone." (Genesis 2:18). This was not necessarily for marriage was much as it was to establish man's sense of community. And accordingly this was God plan to address how good can come to man - to insure he's not alone.

#### 3. Logical conclusion: Social Media can be a good thing.

**APPENDIX B**  
**INSTANT MESSAGING (I SAMUEL 20:3-39)**

## APPENDIX B

### Instant Messaging (I Samuel 20:3-39)

3 But David took an oath and said, "Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, 'Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.' Yet as surely as the Lord lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death." 4 Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you." 5 So David said, "Look, tomorrow is the New Moon feast, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. 6 If your father misses me at all, tell him, 'David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.' 7 If he says, 'Very well,' then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me. 8 As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the Lord. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?" 9 "Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?" 10 David asked, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" 11 "Come," Jonathan said, "let's go out into the field." So they went there together. 12 Then Jonathan said to David, "I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, that I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know? 13 But if my father intends to harm you, may the Lord deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace. May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. 14 But show me unfailing kindness like the Lord's kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, 15 and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth." 16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord call David's enemies to account." 17 And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself. 18 Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. 19 The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. 20 I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. 21 Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the Lord lives, you are safe; there is no danger. 22 But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the Lord has sent you away. 23 And about the matter you and I discussed—remember, the Lord is witness between you and me forever." 24 So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat. 25 He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan,[a] and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. 26 Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially

unclean—surely he is unclean.” 27 But the next day, the second day of the month, David’s place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, “Why hasn’t the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?” 28 Jonathan answered, “David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. 29 He said, ‘Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.’ That is why he has not come to the king’s table.” 30 Saul’s anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, “You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don’t I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? 31 As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!” 32 “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” Jonathan asked his father. 33 But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. 34 Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father’s shameful treatment of David. 35 In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, 36 and he said to the boy, “Run and find the arrows I shoot.” As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 When the boy came to the place where Jonathan’s arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, “Isn’t the arrow beyond you?” 38 Then he shouted, “Hurry! Go quickly! Don’t stop!” The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. 39 (The boy knew nothing about all this; only Jonathan and David knew.)

This was instant messaging - Jonathan gets a message to David, instantly, according to verse

Jonathan and David were the only persons who were aware of what was taking place. This was their communication method. The arrow represented a form of Instant Messaging and they only (Jonathan and David) knew about it. Jonathan’s message to David was for his benefit. He made David aware of what a potential danger and through his information allowed the David the opportunity to avoid it. The instant message was for the benefit of the other party. Likewise, our texting and Social Media posting should be for the benefit of those communicate in that fashion. In other words, this technology, should be a tool for witnessing, helping, encouraging - and above all benefitting those who share this form of communicating with us.

Social Media has created some apprehension and some tension for some people, especially given the fact that someone may not be of the generation in which you were reared in technology. Mark Prensky wrote a piece entitled *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*. In this work he proposes that the present generation - those born just prior and in this millennium have been raised and reared in the Information Age to the degree that they are categorically “digital natives.” All other generations that have preceded them are, for all intensive purposes “digital immigrants.” Herein. is the generational gap and concern. For the younger generation - this tech stuff is nothing, but for the older generation, it is a whole new language and learning curve, to which many do not want to

engage. In addition with the much talk of identity theft that happens by way of the Internet, there is great hesitation to participate in technological communication in the name of paranoia and protection. However, the believer should consider the words and spirit of Joseph in Genesis 50:20 (You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good." If we go back to Jonathan and David we will see that the messaging was for "the good." Moreover, let us also bear in mind that "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the message." (Romans 10:17)

1. What we learn here is our creative ways to communicate can be beneficial. They can actually save someone's life.

Jonathan and David come up with a way to communicate, but we need to take note that the whole purpose of their communication was to preserve David's life. The arrow became a tool by which they instant messaged and as a result David's life was saved from the danger that was directed toward him - an act or plot of Saul to take his life.

As we become more and more creative with our ways of communicating, we must utilize them just as Jonathan did - for the purpose of saving another's life. We should be using our created and creative communicative devices to creatively communicate information that leads to another person's salvation.

2. The intent of our message should be known.

Jonathan was clear with David as to what his message was for and why. We should let those who we communicate with that we are sharing our message because:

- a. We want them to know the truth
- b. We want them to know that they are loved
- c. We want them to live on

These are the reasons Jonathan shot the arrow. These are the reasons Jonathan sent an instant message - to convey truth, love, and a means to keep on living. Likewise, those whom we communicate with should hear the truth, know that they are loved, and be given a message that leads them to extending their life, as in eternal life.



## **APPENDIX C**

**AS LONG AS IT CAN BE USED FOR JESUS (MARK 14:3-9)**

## APPENDIX C

### As Long As It Can Be Used For Jesus (Mark 14:3-9)

3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. 4 Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? 5 It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly. 6 "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 7 The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. 8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

The alabaster jar was made for one specific purpose, but she used it for Jesus. Regardless of the comments and the criticism for what she used by the others, we need to pay less attention to what everyone else said or did in the text and more attention to what Jesus did. For Jesus this was not about "what she used" but rather more about the "why" and the "for whom." There are many people who will quickly offer their comment and their criticism regarding what has or does not have place in the church. They said it about women in ministry; they said it about drums and other musical instruments; they said it about liturgical dance, plays and skits - and many offer their comment without any biblical research on the matter. It was a totally subjective reaction. We should look at the Savior and the Sovereign's reaction first. Jesus in this instance, took the side of the woman with the alabaster jar. Why? Because she did what she did for him!

We cannot be concerned with the trends of popular culture. We cannot look at the "worldly" and say arbitrarily that it does not belong. God can use anything to win people to Christ, to make them relate to Him. Let us not forget He used a man: Jesus looked like the world but represented the kingdom of God. He was a man. He looked like, talked, like, ate like, ..and according to scripture (Hebrews 4:15) was tempted like a man - but he was all kingdom. What has been termed his hypostatic union - fully God and fully man, comes into play here. We can look at Jesus and derive from his very reality that looking worldly and being used for worldly purposes can be two different things. It is all about why we use what we use and for Whom do we use it that matters.

Jesus came to make disciples so that there would be ministry succession, not ministry cessation! Hence the Great Commission - We must "KEEP THIS GOING!" This is what The Lord is conveying to his disciples and commission his disciples to do. Jesus is saying as well to us: KEEP THIS GOING!

1. Our discipleship of Christ was designated for us to do good works.

Ephesians 2:10

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

We were saved for a purpose and that purpose was not simply to go to heaven when our life on earth came to an end, but to bring the goodness of heaven to others while we and they are all yet alive. And so, as we follow Christ and learn his ways and live this Christian life, we need to bear in mind that it is all with a purpose to do good works.

2. The good works are intended to be our witness of Christ.

Matthew 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

For some they have mistaken humility with hidden. In other words, their service to The Lord is such that goes without receiving the credit. However, that often is another way of it going without notice. God did not intend on us to be unnoticed - that would be likened to a lamp that is lit only to be placed under a bowl - it ends up being a deed that was good for nothing. God did not do a good deed in our lives for nothing. (Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 1:6) On the contrary, What the Lord has done through our salvation and furthermore through our discipleship was intended to be noticed, because when we are noticed, we bring notice to Him. Its not about denying the credit but directing others to Whom the credit belongs.

3. Our handiwork should likewise be designated for goods works.

Mark 14:3

"While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head."

Just as we are God's handiwork used to bring out good works, and our good works are for the purpose of others being led to God, so should our handiwork follow suit. This means we should use what we can for the purpose of glorifying the Lord, just as the woman used her perfume. And so, whatever it is, whatever we have, whatever is in our possession should be used for the glory of God.

Today everyone has technology at their disposal - a cell phone or smart phone, the Internet and Social Media in many cases. Although this has been the handiwork of those in the technological industry, it is now in our hands. That said, here's the question: How has it become your "handi-work"? How are you using it for the glory of God.

What the woman with the alabaster jar teaches us is that anything can be used, just as long as it is being used for the sake of Jesus Christ and his mission in the world.

**APPENDIX D**  
**SURVEYS AND SUMMARY**

## APPENDIX D

### Surveys And Summary

In keeping with the Approach To Action Ministry this project was introduced and implemented into my ministry context in several forms and stages, namely: surveys, sermons, teachings and interviews.

#### Survey I

This survey is representative of a random sampling of sixty people of the researchers context and yielded the following information:

- 83% of those surveyed believe people can be led to a faith in Jesus Christ using Social Media
- For 70% of those surveyed it does not matter whether those who were followers or friends on their Social Media networks were Christian or not.
- 76% of those surveyed have never made a Social Media post during a worship service.
- 66% of those surveyed do not post on Social Media any information related to the worship service they have been a part of.

The following responses represents 75% of the 65% of the same sampling of sixty individuals as they responded to the question: What do you believe are the benefits to the use of Social Media as it relates to sharing the gospel message? The comments listed are those who answered the question less ambiguously than those responses not listed.

- Reaching the unchurched/unsaved.
- Social Media is a fantastic vehicle for sharing the gospel message. Just imagine all the people you can reach who want and need to hear the gospel.
- It encourages followers to seek out worship at various worship service of interest.
- Getting inspirational messages from friends that encourage me, and most of the time its what I really needed at that time. Just a good word.
- The use of Social Media is an awesome medium to share the gospel. The internet is global. A cd message does not have the same reach as the internet. Social

Media is a tool that, if used intentionally can support the church in fulfilling the great commission and taking the church outside the building to impact the world.

- Helping someone that doesn't know Christ get to know Him. Someone might need what you have to share to renew their faith in GOD.
- Because people who are looking for a church to come to would have an idea how your church is. I even record and post some of the service on my page so they can get a taste.
- Using Social Media related to sharing the gospel can be a positive tool when appropriate.
- Winning souls to Christ.
- To get the word of GOD out to everyone (believers and non-believers) around your town and further.
- I believe it would take the message to those who may not be able to make it to a church or to those who don't come.
- Connecting with others who don't know Jesus as well as connecting with them that do know Christ as their Savior.
- To be another means of being disciples to others. To invite others to worship with you.
- The advantages of Social Media is spreading the Word of GOD immediately to an extensive amount of individuals. Thus, it is interactive as well. Pray!
- Share your beliefs and faith with others and to spread GOD's name and His word. To inspire others.
- There is greater outreach for sharing the gospel. It is an excellent tool for evangelism.
- I think its important, however, we all are not always savvy or connected to Social Media because of age differences.
- I think it is beneficial to spread the word on Social Media but not during worship service.
- To get the word of GOD to people.
- A soul will be saved.

- Winning souls for Christ. Reaching others that may not be reached. Giving GOD the Glory and Praise!
- To tell people about the Lord. Tell how good GOD is and the way GOD bless us and learn to trust GOD.
- I use it to post when I'm attending United and also when I really got a good message.
- To reach more souls some are shut in or got to work and it may be the only way.
- I believe Social Media benefit people who are unable to attend church especially, if you are someone who work weekends and need the word to make it through the week.
- Many people wake up and use their cell phones, accessing Social Media first thing in the morning. Early inspirational messages may lead people to attend worship and also inspire people to have a better spirit-filled day.
- It can reach souls faster and connect many.
- You can share a message with a host of people abroad.
- The message you share on Social Media could be the word that someone on the edge needed to hear at that moment to talk them off the ledge (figuratively). The right word will reach the right people at the right time. Makes nonbelievers curious.

While the overwhelming majority of responses speak to the use of Social Media as a tool by which the Great Commission can be carried forth favorably; nearly just as overwhelming are the 70% who, when it comes to their Social Media community and/or connections, are not concerned as to whether or not the people who connect with them on a given Social Media network of theirs are Christian. This would suggest that this context, who although is aware of the benefit of the use of Social Media as a witnessing tool and a means to win others to a faith in Jesus Christ, the compulsion to witness and win others to Christ is not a primary concern to them. Herein, reveals the need to instruct and inspire those of this ministry context to know and engage in the spirit of the Great Commission e.g. having a burden for the lost - so much so, that whatever the community, whether cyber or not, there is an unappeasable quest for everyone connected to them to be saved.

## Survey II

This survey was presented in a teaching segment of the project a question was posed as to whether traditional worship services were preferred more or a church service that included aspects of popular culture was preferred. From thirty-three respondents 54% wanted to see the church service with a representation of popular culture included in the

service while 36% preferred a traditional worship service, and 9% wanted a fusion of both a traditional worship service and a church service that included popular culture trends. An 83% majority of those who responded to the survey in favor of adding aspects of popular culture trends into the flow of the church service were of the Baby Boomer generation. However, given the aforementioned data of the previous sampling of twenty-four respondents, it is noted that the Baby Boomer generation was not in favor of Social Media actively engaged in real-time during the actual worship experience. To this end, although an overwhelming majority would appreciate their worship experience including the trends of popular culture; the incorporation of Social Media during the service is not one of the popular trends in which those representing the older demographic of the researchers context would like to see.

### Survey III

Through a random sampling of twenty-four individuals the following information was acquired:

- 100% of the individuals surveyed used the Internet.
- 87% of the individuals surveyed agree Social Media should be used as a Christian ministry.
- 87% of the individuals surveyed agree Social Media should be used as an evangelistic tool.
- 91% of the individuals surveyed agree Social Media should be used as a discipleship tool.
- 50% of the individuals surveyed agree that Social Media should be used during worship.
- 100% of Generation Y agree that Social Media should be used during worship
- 80% of Generation X agree that Social Media should be used during worship
- 35% of Baby Boomers agree that Social Media should be used during worship

According to the above-mentioned data the sampling provides the following inductive conclusion: Although everyone polled uses the Internet, and although a high percentage of whom sees the use of Social Media as beneficial in areas of evangelism and discipleship, there is noted disparity when it comes to the use of Social Media during the actual worship service. All the same, the data reveals there is a gradation of acceptance based upon the generation which those surveyed were a part. While Baby Boomers did not overwhelmingly agree to the use of Social Media during worship, Generation X and Generation Y on the other hand did. It appears that younger the demographic the lesser the disagreement in response to the use of Social Media during the worship experience.



#### Survey IV

This survey was taken from fifteen respondents from the same ministry context conducted via the Internet, 80% of those surveyed strongly agreed that technology is vital to reaching the younger generations, while only 20% strongly agreed that it was vital to reaching the older generations. Moreover 93% either agreed or strongly agreed to the incorporation of popular cultural trends into the traditional church experience. The respondents were a cross-section of generations e.g. the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomer Generation (X), Generation Y and Generation Z.

**APPENDIX E**  
**IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND SUMMARY**

## APPENDIX E

### IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND SUMMARY

The researcher conducted four interviews with individuals, each representing a particular generation. The aim of the interview is to determine what, if any, impact the project had on those who took part.

#### The Silent Generation Respondent

While sharing in an interview with an individual from within the ministry context who represents the Silent Generation (born between 1925 and 1945) the following was shared:

Question: One of the things that I would like for you to consider: If you could go back prior to the teaching and preaching and emphasis regarding technology and Social Media and bridging the generation gap and all of that within the church, and then fast forward to the present time and share with me, if you will, what, if any impact that has had on you?

Response: Well, it has had a positive impact on me. As, and I'll put it this way, as a Senior, I still want to be up to date on things, so I like moving forward and keeping up with what's going on. So it to me it has been a positive impact on me because I'm not caught out of the loop.

Question: Would you say in anyway that your faith, in anyway, may have been either challenged or changed since we've tried to incorporate like Social Media as a part of the witness of our worship?

Response: No, not my faith. Umm, but I have been challenged and that's to the going forth with the new generation - trying to come on board with it. Not my faith, but just the technology piece of it. But my faith remains unchanged.

Question: Has the sermons and bible study and the understanding of scriptures even, as you've participated when you did, has it in any way, or not, affected your opinion regarding the use of Social Media as a means of ministry?

Response: Umm, I believe that it has been useful, will continue to be useful because that's the way that we're going into. I don't to go back. I want to move forward. And I liked, uh, even if I'm at a slower pace, I like moving forward. Umm, I don't want our church to not be, umm, with the now generation.

Question: Do you think Social Media can be effectively used to reach others either to make new disciples or to maintain discipleship?

Response: I think it's one of the best things going right now to reach the masses.

Question: Since we've started and we've been trying to give this emphasis can you share with me, and this may sound similar to a previous question, but can you share with me

how, if any way, you have changed since the teaching, preaching and emphasis about technology and so on and so forth?

Response: It has made me become more aware of what I need to do to actually come on board so it makes ...I'm not there with a whole lot of stuff, but I do more texting, I do less telephone talk. And I do more - well, I'm just going to be honest with you, my grandchildren have practically made me do it. You know if I want to know what's really going on in their lives, I've got to go to their Facebook page. If I really want to see the pictures and all - whereas grand-mommy used to get pictures every other minute through Sears and J C Penny's, well now I have to go on there and cut and paste or just look at'em. You know or even I may fuss at'em and say send me one on the mail, but uh, that's where it's at now. So I have to do it.

Questioner: Well one of the things that I have noticed is you read from your tablet.

Response: Absolutely. And let me tell you what that does, because the blessing of that is, even with the uh the large print bible, I had gotten to the place where I couldn't read it. So that what we do with this is, I can blow this up, you know. Even if it's just one paragraph at a time, I can still see it, and then just scroll. Where on the large print bible, it was large print, but it was still all on one page ...you following me? So this is what makes it my world now. This is my world. Absolutely.

Questioner: Thank God for technology.

Response: Well the other piece of it is, it keeps me - at home when I want to do some reading, I use a magnifying glass. But I don't want to sit in church and use the magnifying glass with the bible. That's just me. That's how I feel. It's helpful in more ways than you think.

#### Baby Boomer - Generation X Respondent

While sharing in an interview with an individual from within the ministry context who represents the Generation X (born between 1946 and 1963) the following was shared:

Questioner: One of the things that I would like, if you don't mind, is to kind of go back prior to the teaching and preaching emphasis for relevance and bridging the generation gap, consider your thoughts then about ministry, your thoughts then about Social Media, then fast-forward, if you will, and let me know if there's been any kind of impact or affect since the preaching, since the bible study, since the sermons as it relates to your whole perception of Social Media and the generation gap.

Response: Well before United Baptist made a effort to try to get the congregation involved in Social Media, say two years ago, there was not much, in the way of our Facebook page responses, there was not much response in our Twitter account, and even as far as emailing outside of the officers of the church, wasn't a lot of communication in that sense. I feel that when you made a concerted effort to start really focusing on the subject of media and Social Media, I can see an improvement that's there. And people

even responding to Tweets I make on a sermon Sunday. Uh, my discipleship class got into a very good habit to email each other to communicate certain thoughts. So as far as I'm concerned that was still your teaching coming into play. The Facebook page is definitely generational because from, I would dare say, 35 on down, that's their world, or that's how they communicate. They don't need to talk. This generation, Pastor, doesn't talk on the phone. They use Social Media 95% of the time - in my opinion. And so, with that being said, I think that the ones 35 and older maybe we can have an impromptu class on really how to get on, or demonstrated in another fashion, it might assist bringing uh the involvement factor up to where it needs to be because as you've often taught, if we don't change and evolve we'll become extinct. This world in all it's aspects, I mean in the church aspect, even education system, everyone is communicating via Twitter, via Facebook, their upgrading all these different ways to do it electronically, so that's where we need to be to be effective as a ministry of United Baptist.

Question: How has your interest in your faith changed since you've incorporated Social Media as a part of your witness as a worshipper?

Response: Greatly. I'm on a daily reading bible series on the Youversion. And everyday I will submit the message via Twitter and via Facebook - everyday. And I have people who are starting to follow me just because some of the bible verses I'll Tweet. And I try to be consistent with it because one things as a young preacher is learning to be consistent - learning to be consistent in my actions. And that has been a great help to me because when I go to do my daily reading the first thing I do is I read the daily message and I try to send it out. And I always try to send it out - ya know, I don't get to it 100%, but I will say 95% of the time I do send those message out, and as a result I know I've gained about 20 or 30 followers on Twitter. That might not seem a lot, but that's 20 or 30 people who did not follow or who were affected by the bible verse I sent out. So in that just lets me know that God is in the blessing business to use any media irregardless of what it is to get the gospel of Jesus Christ out to people.

Question: So are you saying your devotional habits have changed?

Response: Without a doubt, Sir. Without a doubt because one of the things I struggled with, and you got on me about was to be able to, let's say to be able to write a sermon, let's just say, you have to be devotional, you have to spend time on that text - so when that happened, when you dropped that nugget on me, what happened was - in writing sermons I would just focus on that text - I would just focus on that text, and I would stay on it and what that did was, it would start allowing me to see other things that God wanted me to know about the text, which would help me greatly in my sermon writing. But with that being said than my daily devotionals I've increase the habit of reading, trying to read everything twice. I would read it - because there are not that many verses a day in the program I'm in, and then I go back and read it again, so that is showing me that you know what you don't get the first time in reading in devotionals you'll get the second time around. And then I like to also say in that being devotional that's your time with God. Because of my summer job schedule has changed, I haven't been able to get on the Prayer Line like I used to every day, so what I've had to do was increase at lunchtime, on

my own time, but to try to keep that connection with the Father. So I would have to say it's been a great help to me.

Question: So technology has helped you change your devotional habit?

Response: Yes Sir.

Question: Do you feel as if or do you believe Social Media can be effectively used to reach others for the cause of making disciples or maintaining discipleship?

Response: Yes Sir I do. My answer would be yes to that on both.

Question: Do you have a different perspective of or about church as a whole since we've been trying to teach and preach and provide this emphasis of relevance?

Response: My perspective has changed in that now I know that God will use any and everything that man comes up with to use it for the glory of the kingdom. Umm, there was a time when I thought that it had no place in the church, but I've done a complete 180 on that thing. A complete 180, but that's how I thought. And now I did a 180 because now I know my Lord will use anything to find to feed or maintain His flock so that's just one of the things He uses. Liken to the days of early tele-evangelism. All they did was take the media form and use it uh for the benefit of reaching people that didn't know Christ. This is just another rung on that ladder as far as I'm concerned.

Question: Would you say that that perspective has changed a direct result of the teaching, preaching and emphasis on it?

Response: Yes Sir.

Question: As it relates to technology, Social Media, Facebook, Twitter - you've mentioned that 35 and under piece and the difference that there is - so I'm taking it that you - would you say that it is perhaps a necessary tool of ministry certainly for that generation that's younger as opposed to the generation that's older?

Response: I would have to say certainly for the younger generation it's necessary - a 100%, only because that's how they live.

Question: And so, therefore, if you're saying 100% then should I conclude that it is therefore almost necessary in order to reach that generation?

Response: Yes Sir. My opinion. Because from what I see and hear - even though children don't understand - even though you don't say nothing to'em you always watching and listening to them or I am - and they are constantly, ya know when you hear their little conversations they are talking about either Facebook or Twitter or something else they use that I'm not on. But that's how they constantly communicate. This is why they always have their phones in the hands.

Question: You've made an interesting statement. You said, Something you're not on. here's the question: Two years ago where you one any of these things?

Response: No Sir.

Question: Therefore you're saying since we've been teaching and doing this you apparently got on?

Response: Yes Sir.

Question: So therefore one of the affects it's had on you is that you've become more engaged in some of the Social Media mediums?

Response: Yes Sir. That was my 180. Before when I wasn't engaged it was because of my reluctance.

Question: Because you didn't think it had a place?

Response: Yes Sir

Question: But now you see it as a useful tool?

Response: Without a doubt.

#### Generation Y Respondent

While sharing in an interview with an individual from within the ministry context who represents the Generation Y (born between 1964 and 1980) the following was shared:

Question: If you can consider your perception of the use and incorporation of Social Media as a witnessing tool as an aspect of worship prior to the teaching and emphasis and preaching that tried to bring a generational piece in of popular culture and then, if you tell me how, if ay all, your perception changed? What kind of impact did the teaching and preaching have on you?

Response: I think for me I've been aware of, for some time the impact that Social Media can have - but what I've seen since prior to the teaching is that there's been a shift in using Social Media or young people using Social Media to share their faith. So what I've seen of late is that young people aren't as ashamed to share their faith, and they've been more encouraged to share their faith through Social Media. But for me, it's been a tool for me to share my faith, so I've been doing it and maybe others but I haven't seen until now young people using it to share their faith as much.

Question: Can you tell me how the sermons, bible study and/or the understanding of the scriptures during this period of time has affected your opinion, if at all regarding Social Media as a means of ministry?

Response: I think just the title of it "Social Media" kind of intimidated people to think it was all about sharing information connecting with people and prior to the teachings - you know that's what people thought. And so now from the Word we are able to see how it is a tool just like a tape is a tool, a CD or video is a tool for the gospel to reach the masses, I think through the teachings people are now seeing that this medium that's out there is now a tool for them to share their faith that will go further than a phone call, further than a letter, or, you know, it has a global impact because Social Media is global. So I think now people seeing, and the teachings kind of opened our eyes to see that you know God gives us a variety of methods to make disciples, so I think the teachings have done that. They actually gone into the Word to see that we don't have to be in the box. We can use what is culturally - not acceptable, but culturally in demand, and how we can take that which is so popular and use it for kingdom impact.

Question: Do you believe Social Media can effectively be used to reach others for making disciples or maintaining disciples?

Response: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Question: Would you say, has there been any change to your faith since the attempt to incorporate or educate as it relates to Social Media as it relates to witness and worship?

Response: I think it has changed. I think it may have enhanced. I'm more intentional. I am very intentional about what I post on Social Media. You know it's Social Media so some of the things that people post on there are just about your everyday life but one of the things that I've tried to be intentional do with Social Media is let people know that being a Christian isn't all about being in church. And so I'm very intentional about things that I share. And so of late I've been showing that Christians do have fun - that God want us to live an abundant life, and part of that is to enjoy the life that we have. And so, people need to see images of Christians having fun along with those nuggets of scripture and those encouraging, inspiring words that come from faith or those post that we post from the message that we hear on a Sunday morning or a prayer call that we get on during the week but it's -- they need to see a Christian's life - the total life, not just the Sunday morning type of life. And so I think for me the teachings have been helpful because they've been very - not just biblical, but they're life. It's about life. So it's taken the scripture because - you know Jesus didn't say use Social Media to spread the gospel, but the teachings have been so relevant and so complimentary to everyday life experiences. So I think for me it's really enhanced the way or helped me to be more intentional about what I share on Social Media.

Question: Has your perception of church, in and of itself changed since we've been trying to teach and present this paradigm shift?

Response: I think we've become very relevant - you know very relevant because we've made a connection with not just the New Silent Generation but because there are a lot of people who are using Social Media who are outside of that generation. That generation just happens to use it, maybe more effectively and more often, but a lot more people have exposure to it - and umm, so I think the ministry has, like I said become more relevant



because it's something that they connect to. And something that their experiencing, and so when they hear "post something to Twitter" the church is making a connection into their everyday life. And so, I think that the ministry has become - more, more relevant.

### Generation Z Respondent

While sharing in an interview with an individual from within the ministry context who represents the Generation Z (born between 1980 and 2000) the following was shared:

Question: As you know we have been for a while teaching and preaching with an emphasis that dealt with Social Media, dealt with generations and things like that; and what I would like to do for a moment, if you can, is to kind of go back prior to that moment where we were doing that, prior to teaching emphasis, the preaching emphasis, the things of that nature and if you could just tell me beforehand what your perspective may have been like as it relates to Social Media as a witness and for worship, and how if any way has it changed since the teaching and the preaching and the emphasis?

Response: Beforehand it was more so, I could tell from - you know my Facebook experience and having my Facebook friends it was more so not basically used as a witnessing tool, it was more so used as my personal use, and basically my church life nothing to really do with that. And now since then it has become more helpful and I see it becoming more engaging tool for witnessing. It almost makes it seem like perfectly that's what you should be using it for.

Question: Do you have a different perspective about the church itself, whether it's the church of our context "The U" or the church as a whole since we've started this kind of preaching and teaching and emphasis?

Response: I do have a different perspective on it now since then. It's becoming, like I said, it's becoming more a helpful tool. It's just like - it's just like okay after Social Media has put out there all this negative - all these negative images that - you know a child should be on there - you know, as an adult. It was used for dating tools. It was used for all the things - it was like a way of just - you know - used for everything flipped totally on a negative way. Now it brings more of a positive image to it.

Question: How have the sermons or bible studies or even your understanding of the scriptures during the time that we've been teaching and preaching with this kind of emphasis be it Social Media, the generational understanding of relevance - how if any way - it may not have it may have - affected your opinion regarding Social Media as a means of ministry?

Response: I would say that it affected it - umm, in more of a way of, I would have to say - in more of way, umm, of ...I'm trying to think of the word I want to use. It has affected it more of way that you see basically the point that Social Media - you know that like when the sermon you preached about how - you know - instant messaging was in the bible. It showed you more of a way - okay this - you know - this is something - it has been there, but we have not really used it for what it should be really used for. And so,

like I said it shows a - it brings a whole new standpoint on it. It also make you think back in time of you know things that this may have been a tool that may have been invented through the bible. You know because - I can't remember the exact scripture that was used, but when you gave the scripture and then showed the example of it, it was like well maybe did they get that idea from there?

Questioner: That was David and Jonathan

Response: Yes. It was David and Jonathan, so it made it seem like - you know, well maybe this was something used back in their time and they may have called it something different. And we're calling it this now. So how I see it as. You know that's the affect it has had.

Question: Do you believe Social Media can be an effective tool make disciples and maintain disciples?

Response: Yes. I think it's an awesome tool. I think it reaches the ones who are a part of all the Christian faith now and the ones who are not. I believe that's the most helpful tool right now to use because a Jehovah Witness , they can knock on your door and you can close your door on them, we can be outside and you can walk away from me and ignore me, but through Social Media you have - you see my Timeline, and you'll read it. So it's like - it's a perfect tool because there's no way of avoiding it.

Question: Do you think that this whole attempt was beneficial or do you think it was - that when I say attempt, the preaching teaching, what have you, do you think that impacted the wider church and it benefitted the church or do you think it like, well you know, it was nice but there won't be any change? What do you think?

Response: I think it benefitted the church. Umm, like I said I think it benefitted the ones who looked at it as negative now they see the more positive approach on it. And I think it benefitted the youth in a major way because it showed them that "Hey I can find a way to witness to my friends other then just coming up and starting a conversation about Jesus. I can just put something about what's going on in church and what my pastor's preaching about and that's a way to them showing them that hey I'm a part of this Christian faith and I believe in Jesus Christ.

Question: Have you noticed given your age group more people going from just the Social Media side but now including their spiritual side?

Response: Yes. Especially on Sunday morning, you see more youth now - you know, posting - you know, videos on Instagram, messages from sermons or posting things that they - that they heard in a sermon that related to them. And it helps them - it helps them like not be ashamed more of the gospel.

Question: So you think that means apparently then we must be reaching - I'm sorry, the ministry must have a bit more relevant to the young people?

Response: Yes. Much more relevant to the young people and I think that old people as well because i think some of the old people still kind of - they didn't know how could I really do it? And now I think everybody sees like - you know Social Media is the way, it's my way of witnessing.

The interviews conducted revealed similarly the results of the surveys. Generationally the more frequent and more familiarity with use of Social Media is slanted toward generations that are progressively younger. Moreover, recognizing Social Media as a popular cultural trend of the 21st century, the responses offer that the emerging generation and their embracing of Social Media reflects theoretically popular cultural trends have their popularity among the generation which the trend itself has gained its notoriety.

**APPENDIX F**  
**PARTICIPANTS STATEMENT**

## APPENDIX F

### PARTICIPANTS STATEMENT

#### Participant Statement

Today, as my church is preparing to host a family and friends picnic. There was a time that I would have said in the back yard, however it's now the parking lot. My, how times have changed. As we have evolved through the years I have witnessed changes in the teaching and preaching of God's Word. Changes that reflect the many avenues, to which the Word is read, heard and even responded to. I would be the first to say that I was not a fan of social media. Little did I know, what a tool it would become. It took me while to understand the importance of all the excitement surrounding Facebook, Twitter, blog and etc. I always felt the social media had too much power and control. But as I began to understand why God allowed it to be, I could see and recognize the empowering tool that it is. I myself am now using my phone for things other than making calls. I've downloaded apps such as the Navigation and Google. I even downloaded a Bible on my phone. It's really easy to carry. I now see the many souls that can be reached through the social media. Sometimes we resist without rhyme or reason, but sooner or later, it should be revealed if we are willing to be open to the move of God.

#### Participant Statement

I was 12 years old when Social Media was first introduce to me. To my generation it has been the best thing created beside a cell phone. Social Media was the new way to connect with new friends and catch up with old friends you may have lost touch with. It was also away for young people to address their feelings by creating a profile that expressed how you may feel and shared things about who you are. In my opinion parents didn't care for us using social media. Many young people looked at it as fun but I think parents looked at it as nothing but trouble.

It can be very misunderstood from an adult and parents point of view, but since I have sat under my Pastor teaching on how Social Media impacts the church it has changed my perspective and I believe some adults too. Listening to my Pastor teachings made you feel as if Social Media was designed to grow and impact the Kingdom of God. When I think about Social Media I know longer think about any of the bad things about it. I see how it can help you grow in your spiritual life. One way that my Pastor teachings showed me how you can allow Social Media to grow your spiritual life is by using it as tool to evangelize and share your faith with others. It can be hard sometimes to just walk up to your friends and just talk about God. Some may say that don't want to hear you talk about that right now an others may make you think they are listening but it can go in one ear and out the other. As for Social Media you can post things on your timeline and when friends view your profile or just going to check different posts they have no choice but to read what you may be talking about and the more you continue to share your faith before long they may want try the God that you continue to speak about and how your life

changed because of your relationship with God. I have been so blessed to witness some life changing messages. Since these messages I have not only seen my perspective change on Social Media but have experienced seeing more youth and adult within our church using Social Media for more spiritual uses then personal. My Pastor has showed us how you take what may be the popular thing in the world and use it to help change people lives and help them develop in a spiritual way to even become an ambassador for Christ.

#### Participant Statement

Several months ago there was a shift in teaching and preaching in our church. The change involved the encouragement to use technology, specifically social media, to share our faith. This shift, of incorporating social media, has impacted the life of our church in two ways. A significant way this shift has impacted our church and made us more relevant is that we've become more connected and empowered to be a witness for Christ through social media. This shift has also, intentionally, engaged younger members (youth and young adults) in the discipleship and evangelism ministries of the church.

#### Participant Statement

The use of social media is not new to the Body of Christ; however, the cross-over effect or duality of the technology can be intentional in winning souls to Christ. The introduction and utilization of social media at United Baptist Church has expanded the way in which people can receive the blessings of God through preaching, teaching, and witnessing. The accessibility has no limits. People around the globe will experience the intimate power of God in their lives through the various media conduits. I am looking forward to viewing the services that will soon be streaming "live" from The U. Your extensive and intense studies in this area have taken social media to another dimension and will benefit all of those who are connected to The U. Thank you.

#### Participant Statement

During the course of a few months, Pastor Solomon has made an effort to involve United Baptist Church in the use of Social Media. Speaking for myself, I was very hesitant to want to involve myself with Facebook or Twitter; my thinking being that these tools were only for the 'young people' and that they had no real place in the Ministry of spreading the gospel and life saving message of salvation through Jesus Christ. How wrong I was! After getting over the fear of learning (and still learning) how to properly use these tools. I can personally attest to the fact that they DO belong part of a Church's outreach and everyday communication. As we got ready for Homecoming Service we wanted to reach out to people who we have not seen in a while. And we did and they came. How were the majority of them contacted? It was through members of United using Facebook. That is just a very small example of the positive impact Social Media use can have. I hope United continues in teaching on the

importance of using Social Media in the growth of not only United Baptist; but the family of Christ as a whole.

#### Participant Statement

I believe teaching and preaching to the "Glory Of God" can be relevant through social media. This is another way of winning lost souls to Christ. I myself use social media a lot, by posting encouraging words from your teaching and preaching. Just by doing that has touched several lives; to the point they are giving their life to Christ and have joined our Church.

#### Participant Statement

Knowing technology is on the rise and the younger generation is so in tune to social media I think it would be a very effective way for reaching out to the youth that don't attend a church. We must use every source there is to teach and preach the word of God. Bibles are being downloaded sermons are being recorded by cell phones we have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram just to name a few and we as superior to these young people should educate ourselves and learn to speak the language of this new generation. With all the technology coming up daily there should be no excuse for anyone young or old to say they have not heard the word of God.

**APPENDIX G**  
**BEING HIS WITNESSES**



## APPENDIX G

### BEING HIS WITNESSES

Acts 1:1-8

In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

#### Introduction

The New Testament is launched by the writings of the gospels: Matthew, mark, Luke and John. Each of these gospel writers offer their spirit-led record of the Jesus narrative. Matthew launches from the perspective that Jesus hails from a royal and Divine and covenantal lineage which qualifies him to the promised Messiah and indeed the King of kings. Mark launches from the perspective of Jesus' ministry beginning his work from Jesus' baptism, announcing that he is the Son of God and then moving swiftly throughout his work – taking him from the waters of Jordan to the hill of Calvary – all the while showing him as the servant he was. Luke launches from the perspective that begins with the birth of Jesus, so that throughout his work, the humanity of Jesus is stressed. And John is the one who writes what he writes as one who bears personal testimony of Jesus and that through his testimony others may believe in the Son of God.

No matter the writer, the stories, particularly of the synoptic are relatively the same story just reported and recorded in a different way. And so, we read of the miracles and the parables; we read of the amazing things that Jesus did. But we also read that along the way, he did what he did, having with him this eclectic bunch from all walks of life – they became known as his disciples. Each of them having their background, their history, and even their baggage – but nevertheless, Jesus recruited them. He allowed them to intimately share in his life, to watch him and to learn from him. And so they were there when the water turned into wine. They were there when the winds and the waves died down at his command. They were there when a brother who had a legion of demons attempted to take his life got delivered from each and every one of them. They were there when 5000 were fed with two fish and five loaves of bread. They were there and he told

folk to take the stone from out in front of Lazarus' grave and he called Lazarus back from the dead. They saw his authority. They witnessed his power. But now... their journey wasn't just one of miracles and wonders. The truth is, they saw Jesus as their teacher, their *rabboni*, their Master. And so, on many occasions Jesus would take them up into certain mountain plateaus and take the position of a rabbi and teach them about the kingdom of God. He did so with what has become known as the famous Sermon of the Mount that started with the beatitudes in Matthew 5 and closed with Matthew summing everything he taught in Matthew 7 by stating that by the time he finished with all of his teaching, from the beatitudes to how to pray to how to treat others and so on, that the people were blown away by not only his doctrine, but the authority in which he taught it.

The journey that they (the disciples and Jesus) shared was all in preparation. Jesus knew that Calvary was coming, death and the grave had to be conquered, and a resurrection had to take place. He knew that he only had three years to get everybody ready. He had a limited amount of time for them to be able to shoulder the responsibility of the work and the ministry that he had begun. He told them that they would do greater things than he did. But he also knew that he had just three years before he launched them into the world to do his work. He told them that they would be the light of the world and the salt of the earth, but he also knew that his appointment with Golgotha's hill was fast approaching. He had to get them ready, for he knew that after the cross, he was going to have to rely on them to be his witnesses.

#### Transition

At the time of our text, much has transpired. The miracles have taken place. The teaching has gone forth. You name it and Jesus has done it, and Mathew, Mark, Luke and John have recorded it. He has healed the sick. He has delivered the demon possessed. He has raised the dead. In fact, he has done what has been the very pinnacle of his purpose in life – he has suffered, bled, died, and he has been raised from the dead. The very climax of his ministry has taken place. Jesus was crucified, buried – and early one Sunday morning, God the Father saw to it that His Son, got up from the dead, escaped the grave, just like He said that he would.

But now, we see that Jesus delayed his return to glory. We see, according to Luke's continued work known as the Acts of the Apostles that Jesus didn't head straight back to take his place at the right hand of the Father right away. No he remained another 40 days and spent that time with his disciples. Right here, everyone who is a disciple of the Lord ought to take a moment and thank God for Jesus. Now you may say, Why? Because, when you are a disciple and you look at all that he has done, you realize that he has got to love you beyond Calvary. Oh I hope that you've got that.

Too many people see Calvary as Jesus's sacrifice and as his greatest demonstration of his love for them. And yes, Calvary was more than any of us could ever imagine. This was a moment in Jesus' ministry that he even wanted to opt out on. You remember his prayer in

the garden of Gethsemane? Where he asked his Father to take away the cup? Calvary ought to make us in the words of the spiritual – tremble, tremble, tremble. Think about it: Having been affixed to wooden planks with rough, jagged, spikes that we call nails - piercing through the flesh of his wrist and feet; think about it. The crown created from thorn twisted twine pressed upon his brow until blood broke forth from his forehead. Think about it. Having been jabbed in the side with a spear. Think about it. The sun stopped shining. And for six hours he's suffering, bleeding, praying, and dying. And died he did. And after all of that. After being even placed in the tomb. After he did what was required of him to purchase our pardon, we see that he hangs around. Here's the love! And notice: it is after Calvary. Here is Jesus, who puts on hold, his return to the place of perfection, paradise even. to hang out a little longer with imperfect people. There's the sacrifice. And there's the love beyond Calvary. And here's the question: Why did Jesus do it? The answer is right here in the text. And you shall be my witnesses after the power has come upon you.

Jesus knew that them hanging out with him wasn't enough. He knew that a bible study wasn't enough. He knew that even them seeing his nail print hands and wounded side after his resurrection wasn't enough for them to be his witnesses. You see he knew that in order for them to be his witnesses that they were going to need power to be his witnesses. You see up until now, that had the dedicae, the doctrine, but not the dunamas; they had the pedagogy, but not the power; they had the fellowship, but not the fire. Jesus knew that being his witnesses was going to require – power!

They were about to go forth and represent him in a world that just crucified him. In a culture that just asked for Barnabas to be set free and cheered Jesus' death sentence. They were followers of this radical from Nazareth. They were those who now represented the one whom the devil thought he had in checkmate. And since he could not hold Jesus down, he would now come after every one who was lifting Jesus up. Jesus knew that they were going to need power to be his witnesses. Not church power. Not I'm a Christian power. Not I've been a member for so many years' power...but Holy Ghost power!

But hat is Holy Ghost power?

# I.

It is the power that overtakes you at the right time to do the work God has called you to do - to live the life that God has called you to live. Jesus instructed his disciples to go and to wait for the promise. They questioned him on the when it would happen to which he told them that the timing of everything was up to the Father. You see all they had to do was to be doing what they were instructed to do and by doing so, they would be in the right place at the right time for the promised power that they would need to do what were called to do - the power to be his witnesses.

Pentecost had to come - in the sense of the festival celebration of the Feast of Weeks. God had to wait to the crowd was in place. And Pentecost was the time in which people came from all over to celebrate. It was on the day of Pentecost that God decided to move and manifest the presence and power of His Spirit. This was so the disciples would have what they would need to do what they were called to do, at the time it would be required of them to live the life The Lord had been preparing them for.

And God still moves in this fashion. Even as we are being prepared through sermons and bible studies and devotions and so forth, at the right time, He sees to it that we also have His Spirit to live the life He's been preparing us to live and calling us to live and commissioning to do.

## II.

It is the power that equips you ...at the right time and gives you the ability to do the work that God has called you to do. Interestingly, Pentecost brought people from different walks of life with different languages as well. When the Spirit came upon the disciples, the Spirit also equipped them to do what they had heretofore no ability to do - and that is speak another language. And it is here that we learn what being His witnesses really means: It means being able to speak His message in another - relevant language. That's what the day of Pentecost shows us - they spoke in a relevant language - get this: to simply draw them to a point where they could hear the gospel message that Peter would eventually preach.

During the week, we should be speaking to others in a language that is relevant to them. Not citing always scriptures verbatim, but sharing the message, so that when the time is right, they will hear the gospel message. And take note: at that time, God will use one person and be the necessary translator for everyone. This is what happens on a Sunday morning when the preacher stands: God uses him or her and then through His Spirit sees to it that they all hear what they need to hear.

## III.

It's the power that turns the world upside down. It is the power to change the world! This is the aim of being His witnesses - we are to change the world, and through the Spirit of God we become world-changers! And God will give us the ability to do so, even in areas of self professed inadequacy - His Spirit will make up the difference so that we can do what He has called us to do. Whatever the challenge - even in this new era, this new day - like the day of Pentecost, God will send a new wind of His Spirit - a fresh wind. Technology can become our testimony. Social Media can be used to share the message. It's the language of the culture, but it can be the language used for the kingdom!

## **APPENDIX H**

### **GOD IS DOING A NEW THING IN THE SAME PLACE**

## APPENDIX H

### GOD IS DOING A NEW THING IN THE SAME PLACE

Exodus 3:1-6

1 Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the back *or* west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb *or* Sinai, the mountain of God. 2 The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, yet was not consumed. 3 And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. 4 And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush and said, Moses, Moses! And he said, Here am I. 5 God said, Do not come near; put your shoes off your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. 6 Also He said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

#### Introduction

One of the oldest institutions happens to be the place or places where the people of God come together. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, we read of the Temples, the synagogue, and even the homes in which believers would come together. From the ornate structures of Solomon, David, and Ezra within the walls of Jerusalem, to simple homes where the roofs could be torn open, and alabaster boxes could be broken open – to the ecclesia of New Testament and the 1<sup>st</sup> Century believers – the church, who were known as The Way – even to the churches of today: down through the ages, people have made their way to a place where they would worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, where they could encounter the Person and power of Jesus Christ, and where their faith would be revived, renewed, and recharged.

Throughout the centuries men and women have assembled for the sake of worshipping God, learning His Word, and to be encouraged and empowered to remain faithful unto the One who has been faithful to them. And down through the years, there have been modifications made to the temples, the synagogues and houses of worship. The structures have changed. The order of service has changed. In fact, so much has changed. And although we worship the same God as did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the children of Israel; although lift our songs to the same God as did David and Asaph; although we pray to the same God as did Paul and Silas; the places we gather in are not the same and the way in which we may worship is not the same. Our buildings are different. Our songs are different. Our prayers are different. Same Bible. Same God: But different religious experience. Times have changed ...and so have the temple and the worship in the temple.

As culture has evolved, and as modernity has rendered things of the past relatively irrelevant, so has the church seemingly kept pace with society's evolution; although not striding step for step, the church has followed somewhat behind, and as culture has

changed so has the church also changed its ways as well. We no longer bring sacrificial animals, or grain, and such as an offering unto the Lord. We no longer find ourselves transporting the Ark of the Covenant or following a cloud by day or a pillar of fire by night. No longer are subjected to the indulgences of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century of the Catholic Church – thanks to Martin Luther and his 95 theses we now embrace the priesthood of all believers.

Church has changed. Many no longer have Baptist Standard Hymnals as the words of songs are now projected upon the screens in our sanctuaries. What people wear to church has changed. How the choirs present their music has changed. How preachers convey the message has changed. Theatrics and visual aids are more prevalent than theologically integrity and exegetical exactness. In other words, some are preaching for an immediate response and reaction to “*their*” message, than preaching for people to have a life-long relationship with Jesus Christ. So much has changed. And now, it’s changing again.

Culture has made some significant shifts over the last 50 years as it relates to the Christian faith and the church of Jesus Christ. We have witnessed moral compasses become lost in this post-modern era. We have seen boundaries become a thing of the past. Political correctness has become the campaign to not offend – but this (Political correctness) was not I believe the end game of those who fought for the rights of a people, who – because of the dark hue of their skin, the pigmentation categorization that was the result of one drop of blood from a descendent that was a person of color, ...something that they had no say-so about, who were beaten and jailed unjustly, discriminated against, and treated like non-humans – I do not believe that when rights were marched for, and blood was shed for, and lives were lost for – that it was so that we would live in a day and age where anything goes because we dare not offend someone by saying something. So many people have used the rights in which Black people struggled for, for hundreds of years to justify rights they ought to have as well. Live and let live has become the cultural mantra. So much has changed. And this is the reason why God has to do a new thing, even in the same place. He, in His wisdom, knows that people have allowed the culture to become – not only Post-modern, but also post-God, post-Christ, and post-church. We are living in an age where society has reasoned that there is no need for God or a faith in God. People have actually become convinced that they are in the words of the poem, *Invictus*, the master of their fate and the captain of their soul.

Now what folk do not realize is that God isn’t going to let them turn away from Him without doing what He can to make Himself known to them. He knows that people have heard of Him. He knows that they are aware of the church. But He also knows that He must do something, which causes them to know ...He is real! He has watched as folk have become post-religious and irreligious. He has observed the decline and He is aware of the downward spiral, His creation is on. He has an appointed time in which His Son will return and the rapture will take place and the dead in Christ will rise and those who remain will be caught up to meet him in the air. He knows exactly when there will be the

passing away of the old earth and there will be a new heaven. And because He is love, and doesn't want us to reach a point where forget He is ...He'll make Himself known in familiar places. In fact, God has me preaching this because He is doing a new thing, but it is going to be in the same place.

### Transition

This is what the Lord is showing us in this Exodus narrative: He can do a new thing even in a familiar place. Moses, one of the renown bible characters becomes the person whose life we will follow to see just how God does what He does.

At the time of our text the children of Israel are in bondage. They are serving Pharaoh in Egypt and they are building the cities of Pithon and Ramses under duress by way of Pharaoh's taskmasters. Meanwhile, while they are going through in Egypt, Moses, a fellow Hebrew has been on the run - in witness protection almost if you will. He had killed an Egyptian and since, has been on the run, and has begun a whole new life. He's married and tends to his father-in-law's sheep.

One day while Moses is tending to the sheep, he happens to see a bush. This bush captures his attention because it's on fire, but the fire is not consuming the bush at all. The bush is just aflame. This sight is stirring up his curiosity, so much so that he wants to get closer to see it, to examine it, to figure out - as the bible says, "What is this strange sight?"

Now here is what is interesting, Moses - the shepherd he is, for him this was not a new route, but a familiar one. He's been this way before. and most likely he has passed this bush before - but this time, the bush is noticeable. So much so, it could not be ignored. Same route. Same bush. Same Moses. But this time God decided to do something different in the same place. God decided to do a new thing in the same place. The bush was on fire!

The bush that became common; now has caught Moses' attention: he cannot just walk by it. He can not just act like it's none existent. Permit me to suggest to you that the church is the 21<sup>st</sup> century bush. For some it has become a common institution of religion and religious practice; for some it's become the place of prayers, praise and preaching - of family and fellowship. Some it's become so common that the church experience - even through they take part - does not stir their attention. There are those not connected to the church and for them - the institution has been passed by, ignored, and their curiosity about it has gone unchallenged and unstirred. But now...God is doing a new thing - and dare I say in a familiar place - the church. The church will be His bush. Which means God is about to do something amazing with the church - a head scratching, mind blowing amazing thing!

### I

God's not trying to get our attention: He's trying to get our audience. There is something He wants to share with us ...and what He wants to share is His plan for our better! The



bush was on fire, but it was on fire to not simply get Moses' attention, but to appeal to Moses in such a way that God would end up having Moses as His audience. Remember that the bush stirs a curiosity in Moses to the point that he has move closer. But also recall from the reading of the passage that it is as if this was all a part of Gods plan, because as Moses gets closer, that's when God begins to speak to him. God used the bush to get Moses' audience - because there was something - indeed life-changing, God wanted to tell him.

God does something so that Moses can see. Moses sees it – get this, so that Moses will hear Him. God gives Moses a visual, so that Moses would eventually hear His voice. This means that what God is going to do new – you will see it, first! Sometimes the new thing that we are seeing is packaged in a familiar thing we have already seen.

## II

God uses what you routinely do to reveal the new thing that He is doing. Moses is tending to the sheep as he routinely does. God knew this. God to the route Moses would take. God knew just when to set the bush aflame. He was going to reveal to Moses this new thing He was doing in a thing that Moses routinely did. Sometimes the new move of God is discovered in the things that we are doing already. How we go through our day-to-day and so forth, just may be just where God is going to commence His next and new move! On your job, in your home, at the gym, over the Internet....you name it, and that just may be where God will reveal the new thing that He is going to do.

## III

The new thing is for the purpose of of deliverance. When all is said and done, God did all that He did through that bush because it was His desire to deliver His people. He was going to get one man on board so that a whole nation could be set free. ...All it takes is one! Yes, God can change the world with one! Our faith is Christ is proof of this. Through one man - on one Friday - on one cross - after borrowing one grave - and after getting him up one Sunday - God changed the world!

This is our creed. This is our motto: To become the change that changes the world!

**APPENDIX I**  
**MINISTERING TO THE MISUNDERSTOOD**

## APPENDIX I

### MINISTERING TO THE MISUNDERSTOOD

Acts 9:10-19

10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. 11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." 13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." 17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.

#### Introduction

The narrative that is before us is one that represents a major moment in the life of Saul and perhaps even greater still in the history of the Christian faith, let alone the Christian church. This 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Acts of the Apostles is the record of the conversion of Saul, whom we would regularly refer to later as the Apostle Paul. It is here in the scriptures where we are privileged to see, according to Luke, the beginning of Paul's story, where his testimony originated, and how he came to be the anointed apostle that he did.

To put his story in context, we must bear in mind that Jesus has, by now, affected culture like no other individual in the history of humankind. After all, as Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) and indeed after the cross and the empty or vacated tomb – there was no way things were going to remain the same. He had over the span of three years done too much for things to be the same. His teaching, his miracles, his dying, his death and of course, his resurrection have changed the minds of many regarding what has been their faith positions and their following of the law as put forth by the Scribes and as enforced by the Pharisees. He has challenged the political and religious systems of his day. And now, there were those whom he discipled – whom he got ready to carry on his message and his ministry, and prayed that they would continue in his way, ...doing things his way and making more disciples of him.

These disciple's of Christ: would prove themselves faithful. Honoring Jesus' command to go to Jerusalem even as he himself ascended to heaven. They went as he instructed. They waited as he told them to. They waited for the power of the Holy Spirit as he promised them he would come. And he came even as the sound of the rushing of a mighty wind made known his presence. They were filled with that power. They stood in that power and witnessed to thousands about Jesus. And according to the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Acts, the church, the ecclesia, the called out was underway. More disciples were birthed in that single moment following the message of a single preacher named Peter. 3,000 people were saved...and since this predated denominations and reformations, they were simply a part of the Way. They joined "The Way." They went from house to house. They fellowshiped regularly: They broke bread. They prayed for each other: And they learned more and more about the kingdom. The Way, the church, the followers of Christ were growing daily. People were becoming Kingdom citizens ...and as such, there were those who took exception.

The Christ movement had intruded upon the ideological and theological territory of the priests and the Sadducees. The bible says that they (the priest and Sadducees) became jealous and started to arrest the Lord's apostles. They wanted them to stop witnessing and winning people over to this newfound movement, known as the Way. But there was no quit in the Lord's disciples. They were sold out ...and all-in for the cause. They kept on proclaiming Christ and the number of believers continued to grow. But now, whenever faith is making headway, whenever people are lead to believe, and the community of believers is growing – whenever the plan of the Lord is succeeding, we soon discover that the forces against faith don't give up either. There's no quit in them as well.

They had to find a way to come against those who were a part of The Way. And so, they conspired against a brother named Stephen. They lied on him. Created these trumped up charges of Blasphemy and found him guilty ...and stoned him to death. He dies a martyr. Standing up for Jesus even under the onslaught of stones. And standing right there in total agreement of Stephen's death is Saul.

Not long after Stephen's death, there is an all out persecution against the church. Killing Stephen wasn't enough. In fact, Saul realized that this is what the people wanted and so, he went and got permission from the priest to go after everyone who called on the name of Jesus. And with permission, he sought to imprison and persecute anyone who was a part of the Way.

The bible says as he was on his way to Damascus to harm those who were believers, his plans and his life were interrupted. A light and dare I say, the Lord knocked him down. And then we are told he hears a the voice of Jesus ask him, "How come you're persecuting me?" In other words, Saul why are you doing this? Before we know Saul is

blind. He is unable to see. And now he needs help to get around. This mind you was all a part of the Lord's plan. He wanted to put Saul in place where he would discover God and God's plan for his life - through a problem that led to his praying - and his praying led to his calling; it led to the life the Lord wanted him to live.

Now what is interesting is the fact that God calls a disciple, a man by the name of Ananias. He tells Ananias to head to Judas house on Straight Street and there he will find a man named Saul. Ananias was told that he was to lay his hands on Saul and restore his sight. But Ananias has a problem with his assignment. His problem is Saul. In his eyes Saul is a difficult person to minister to because of his history, his reputation, the things that he had been doing. Ananias has a problem ministering. His problem is who he is called to minister to. In Ananias' eyes he couldn't see the point in ministering to someone who was so anti-Christ and anti the Way - or if you will, anti the church.

Saul becomes someone who represents the misunderstood - the anti-church - the anti-Jesus crowd; that demographic that wants nothing to do with the church and so forth. And some people, some churches even have a problem with anyone anti-them, and as a result, like Ananias who has been called to minister to this precise crowd, would rather take exception to the assignment. Sometimes to the degree that it's not even carried out.

Saul's are everywhere. They are people with a past, people with an issue with the church; people who have a problem with Christians; people who have done some serious wrong...and God is calling us to minister to them. One of the things that we must understand in is that our ministry is not about their history but about their future.

Saul may have had a history in the natural, but he has a future in the spiritual

Here's what this teaching us today:

## I

When it comes to our ministry we aren't suppose to see through judgment, but rather we are to see through Jesus. Ananias was originally judging Saul until the Lord caused him to see Saul as He saw him. Saul was much more than a person with a past and with a reputation, he was a person with a purpose that was in the will of God.

God sees purpose and not punishment and that is called: grace. Which means our ministry in one of grace, which is something we all should know a little something about. God has indeed been a God of grace - not punishing us, but giving us the grace that enables us to have another chance, that enables us to develop distance between what was the past, what was a reputation and gives us that chance to start anew. Grace says God has a purpose for us.

## II

Some of God's major plans have something to do with those things that are misunderstood by us. The Lord often defies the logical and what is logical to us. We believe it ought to make sense to us, but God believes that it just needs to be of use to him. You see, it may not make sense to us, but it is of use to him. Consider every miracle He has ever performed - it has never really made sense, but think about it - in the end, it always became of use to Him, because you see our miracles becomes His testimonies.

Saul was misunderstood - but when it came to God, he became a phenomenal witness for the kingdom. When God gets His hands on those who we least likely think will be people of faith, He often calls them to be the most used by Him. Saul/Paul misunderstood by Ananias, but useful for the ministry of God. The anti-Christian, becomes the ambassador for the kingdom of God - God's major witness of Christ. The one who was against the church becomes the one who plants churches, establishes church doctrine and polity, and so forth. Imagine if Ananias never laid hands on him.

### III

We may be the confirmation that someone is waiting on. Remember Saul had prayed, Through prayer God showed him Ananias. Saul was waiting on Ananias. And so, when he showed up and laid hands on Saul and that which was like scales fell from Saul's eyes in the process - Saul knew the Lord was indeed behind it. We do not know whom God has met in prayer and showed them that we would be the one's who would reach out to them. But now, the laying on of hands here is a sign - a symbol, a indication of contact and connection. We can't be confirmation, if we are not doing our part to make contact and make that necessary connection. And we can't make a connection without being relevant. God is calling us to make a connection.

This is what God did Himself through Jesus Christ - He made a connection with us, taking on the form of man, living amongst us, taking on our sins on the cross, and conquering death and the grave for us. He showed us, through Christ, that what He can do for him, he can do for us. He showed us through Christ that if Jesus can minister in such a way to benefit us, we should do likewise and minister to others - not forgetting we at one time were among those who people thought this (the church, being a Christian) was something we did not belong, we didn't deserve to be a part - no one could see it, but God saw that in spite of all of our disqualifies, we would end up His disciples ...and not only His disciples, but empowered with the dunamas, and deputed to do awesome things in His name!

**APPENDIX J**  
**GOD IS STILL MOVING**

## APPENDIX J

### GOD IS STILL MOVING

Luke 24:50-53

Acts 2:1-21; 41

#### Introduction

The Bible is a book that is filled with extraordinary events - from the six khiarotic days of creation to the exilic revelation received by John while he was on the island of Patmos, we have read and encountered great and extraordinary moves and miracles of God. Indeed to turn the pages of this book and to read the stories within it is to become inspired, encouraged, and empowered simply through the way it shows God on any given day. Yes, we can read the scriptures, we can hear a sermon - and in the words of the writer of Romans receive faith - a faith to believe that the God we have just read about and heard about not only has moved back when, but can still move in the here and now.

We have seen in the scriptures God creating ex nihilo an entire world and universe - from the sun, moon and stars to every living thing and every living creature that exist between heaven and earth. According to writers of Genesis a day was designated from the first to the seventh in which we read about how God worked and how God rested. Everyday though, God was doing something: fashioning a world, forming man, putting forth through His word and His hands this organic thing we call life.

Ever since He has created the world, He has been keeping it moving - from one day to the next, from one week to the next, from one month to the next, from one year to the next, from one century to the next, from one millennium to the next - He has been keeping things going. He has seen and witnessed the evolution of the man in which He has made. Humanity has come a long way from the Garden of Eden ...and this book, the bible, has captured everything from murders to miracles, from wars to rescues, from demons and disease to deliverance, and from death to resurrection. And in every page of the book, there is God. And while man has changed and the world has changed - God has remained constant - the same, immutable; and it is said of his son - the Christ, that he too is the same yesterday, today and forever more. It may be a different day and a different time, but it's the same God managing from on high, moving in our midst and manifesting the things and the miracles that we need.

Just because the book has been printed and published; just because the Author has stopped writing doesn't mean the Author has stopped working. Just because the Author has stopped writing doesn't mean that He has stopped speaking. No, God is still moving. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. He is in the here and now - just as He was in the then and there.

It's a new day ...but with the same God!  
He's still accessible  
He's still reliable



He's still powerful  
 He still performs miracles  
 And quite frankly sometimes we do not know He's still until we're still and take heed to  
 the words of the psalmist and be still and know that I am God.

It's a new day ...but with the same God!

History may have been made but His story is still in the making. In other words, just  
 because there is a record of the extraordinary things God has done doesn't mean that God  
 is done! And done doing extraordinary things.

#### Transition

This Bible gives it to us all - narrative after narrative, story after story, wonder after  
 wonder, miracle after miracle. Hopefully someone is seeing a pattern here. Turn the  
 pages in this book and it's just like turning the pages in our lives - chapter after to chapter,  
 God is doing something - watch this, even when it looks like, nothing else can be done.

What better example of this than what we read about when we read of the story of Jesus.  
 Mind you, Jesus comes on the scene after all of the Old Testament history has taken  
 place. He enters the biblical narrative after the generations of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.  
 He comes on the scene after Joseph, Moses and Joshua have lived, after Saul and David  
 have reigned as king. He arrives after the three Hebrews were delivered from the fiery  
 furnace and the fourth from the lions den. Jesus comes after the judges, prophets and  
 kings; after accounts of miracles, The Promised land, and other great moves of God.  
 After forty and two generations - he shows up. Immaculately conceived, nine months in  
 the womb of a virgin, birthed in Bethlehem - just a babe then, but a child that would  
 change the world.

He spent thirty years becoming a man - being tempted in every way everyone else is. He  
 was baptized by John in the Jordan and then led of the spirit to be tested by the devil.  
 Forty days and nights he had fasted and when the devil came at him, he was ready. He  
 was baited but never took the bait; instead he stood his ground and caused the devil leave  
 to face him another day. From that moment on, we read of the teaching and the miracles  
 of Jesus as the gospel writers chronicle his life from Galilee to Golgotha and back to  
 Galilee again.

We see Jesus' life go full circle - from his life to his death to his life again. We read of the  
 extraordinary things he did while he lived and of the extraordinary way in which he died;  
 and we read of the day - that morning when it was discovered he was no longer in the  
 tomb. He took the sting of death and robbed the grave of its victory. His blood was shed.  
 His life was given. He conquered the cross and came back from the dead. But he had not  
 ascended back to glory yet. He was resurrected but he had not yet ascended. There was  
 still some more work to do, some more words to share, and a Great Commission to give.  
 And so, he remained with his disciples and showed them more miracles, gave them more  
 proof that He, in fact is the Son of God (what proof do you need?). And then the bible

says that he led them out of Bethany, told them to wait on the promise in Jerusalem, and afterward he ascended back to the Father.

But now, the bible does not stop here and one would think that perhaps it should. After all, Jesus has come and done all that he was supposed to. Everything has been done that needed to be done. Jesus has done it all. He has taught. He has performed miracles. He has lived, bled, died, and come back from the dead. He has been our ultimate sacrifice. He has paid the price for our sins. He has made our salvation possible. Everything's done. But there pages keep turning, the chapters keep changing ...because God is still moving!

He got up.  
He went up.  
And the Holy Spirit came down!

The Day of Pentecost

It's a different day ...but the same God.

# I

## Relevant Truth is More Important Than Religious Tradition

We must understand that everyone was in the city because of a religious tradition - Pentecost. And so people came from everywhere because they were being religious. Pentecost was a festival that was long standing... It dated back, all the way back to the ancient articles in which the Israelites were called to observe. And so, people came from every where, from all over the place. And they came to thank God for the harvest. --- What they received!

Understand that at the same time God was moving in a house, we know it as the upper room. He was moving in the lives of those who were already committed to following Jesus.

A. A new language for the disciples, but a familiar language to the crowd.

The church has to learn the language of the crowd so that God can become relevant and the unchurched can be won. No one is coming to your church until you show them the relevancy of your Christ.

There are generations who speak a whole different language than you do. Marc Prenksy is responsible for giving us the term Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants. He suggests that there are those who were brought up in the Information Age, the age of the Internet and so forth and as such they were raised learning the language of the Internet - of Social Media, of Apps and the like - these are those who he calls Digital Natives - the Internet and Social Media is their native language. This is a crowd that Christ wants to reach, but we will have to learn the language in order to do so.

We can't just learn and love the hymns of the church, but we also need to learn and dissect the music of popular culture - because it represents and reflects the language of the culture. We need to exegete the lyrics and allow God to show us how He can be witnessed through them.

We've got to learn the language of the crowd.

B. God would rather have people reached with His message than He would have them to be religious where He doesn't mean anything

There are a lot of people who attend church religiously. Sunday after Sunday you can find them in church. There are those who eventually join the church and before long they learn the ways of the church, and the cycle continues: The church becomes a station that develops church-folk, but not necessarily disciples, Christians, and so forth. Sadly the church loses its Theocentricity and Christocentricity. It is no longer God-centered and Christ-centered. The ceremony is what's important. The song is entertainment. The sermon is endured. The offering is accommodated. But God's presence is ignored. This is what Pentecost was until the message made a difference.

The message is supposed to make the difference. It is supposed to reach people, not make people religious. For through the message - according to Romans 10:17, faith comes by hearing the message! When the message is relevant, when the language is one that connects, when it reaches the people right, the result is faith and faith that is right - not religious.

What is right faith? It is faith where conviction is real, where conversion takes place, and where Christians represent the kingdom, not church-folk. God is still moving through Christians!

## II

Faith must be fed - This is how Christians keep moving! ...And they continued in the apostles doctrine, in the breaking of bread, in fellowship and in prayers. Those who make up the body of Christ must keep feeding their faith - because God will keep moving through us, provided we continue in Him. We've got to continue in His teaching, in our togetherness, in our time with Him, because He's counting on us to be His ambassadors - empowered to witness, empowered to win others, empowered to keep what He started moving! And not just moving but growing!

God moves and He is still moving because He wants His church to grow. But let me be clear, when I say church, I am referring to the ecclesia, the called out. And the called out have to be called out by what they can relate to. This is why the church cannot be an institution that is community unto itself, but communicates the message that causes its community to grow! Because its growth is a sign that God is still moving!

## III

What started then is still moving now - through us!

Yes, we are the indication that God is still moving. His grace on our lives. His gift of another day. Our witness of His blessings. It's all a sign that God is still moving. God is counting on us to let the world know that He is still moving.. He is counting on us to tell His story and to continue to tell His story, so that others will know He's real!

What started then - should still be moving now - through us! Meaning, the miracles then, should still be taking place now. The healing then, should still be taking place now! The deliverance then, should still be taking place now. Salvation of souls then should still be happening now!

And why, because the Christ that was preached then, should still be preached now - through us!

His life told through us

His dying told through us

His bleeding told through us

His death told through us

His burial told through us

His resurrection told through us

And told until others know He's real

Told in such a way that others can relate

Told in such a way that others enter into a relationship with Him!

**APPENDIX K**  
**IT COST TO KEEP MOVING**

## APPENDIX K

### IT COST TO KEEP MOVING

Joshua 5:2-12

2 At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again." 3 So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelites at Gibeath Haaraloth. 4 Now this is why he did so: All those who came out of Egypt—all the men of military age—died in the wilderness on the way after leaving Egypt. 5 All the people that came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness during the journey from Egypt had not. 6 The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. For the Lord had sworn to them that they would not see the land he had solemnly promised their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7 So he raised up their sons in their place, and these were the ones Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised because they had not been circumcised on the way. 8 And after the whole nation had been circumcised, they remained where they were in camp until they were healed. 9 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the place has been called Gilgal to this day. 10 On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. 11 The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. 12 The manna stopped the day after[c] they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

### Introduction

For those of us who have had the opportunity to read the Book of Joshua, we have learned that this is a work that shares with us that God is faithful to what He has promised. From the very beginning of the book, we read of God, basically keeping His word. In fact, the narrative of Joshua is just that - a narrative of God keeping His word.

It is important to understand that the Lord promised that He would deliver the children of Israel from the oppressive conditions that they were experiencing. He promised to make life better for them. Indeed, in Exodus 3:7 we see just how God knows what His people are going through - how He knows just what they are dealing with - and how He's planning to work things out for them. From that promise, we then read in the Book of Exodus of the journey the people of God undergo. We read of their delays, their challenges and ultimately their deliverance out of Egypt. This is what exodus means: it means a going out, a departing, and it is usually referring to a whole lot of people moving out at the same time. And so, the Book of Exodus is a book that is showing us how God gets a whole lot of people out of the way of life that has them crying, hurting, unhappy and wanting for better. This is not a work that shows God delivering one person - but a whole lot of people. And He does it at the same time. I wonder what would be our response if we believed - the same God would work in the same way, today? Where He

decided to it for everybody. Can you imagine - everyone on your pew, everyone around you, was delivered from everything that was making life difficult, everything that was getting them down, everything that made them unhappy - all at the same time?

Exodus shows God doing just this: Getting everyone out of what was the bad part of their life.

Conversely, the Book of Joshua though is the book that shows God fulfilling what He promised, finishing what He started: bringing to pass the better that He said they would experience. Joshua isn't about God getting them out of anything, but rather, God taking them into that which He had waiting on them. It shows God working to overcome every obstacle that was in their way, to insure they arrived at what He promised.

Between the two books we can note four vital characteristics of God that you would never want to forget, and they are God:

- (1) First, doesn't like to see you go through
- (2) Secondly, God will do what is necessary to get you through and to have it, whatever "it" is, behind you
- (3) Third, God is never satisfied with you just having some unhappy aspect of your life over and done with - He wants you to keep moving and to experience all of that, that is wonderful that He has in store for you.
- (4) God will help you get through every obstacle that stands between you and the "good" He has promised.

The Book of Joshua shows us primarily how God wants His people to keep moving, so that they can experience - have - and enjoy all that God has in store for them. It should definitely be noted - that being present to hear this message and certainly this part of the message, is not some coincidence - at least, I would hope someone's faith can accept that, ...because by now you should have heard and hopefully received these two things:

- (1) God is going to do what it takes to make things better
- (2) God has better already in place - and it is waiting on you.

But here's the catch: You have to keep moving - and sometimes to do so, it may cost you.

TO ARRIVE AT THE PLEASURABLE,  
MAY REQUIRE A NON-PLEASURABLE JOURNEY

TO GET TO WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED  
MAY REQUIRE A PRICE YOU WEREN'T  
AWARE YOU HAD TO PAY

- (1) It may cost you to get out of what's so bad.
- (2) It may cost you to get that which the Lord has for you that is so much better.

The children of Israel - and for the purposes of this time that we are sharing, we all need to see ourselves in *them* - they had to keep moving to get what God had promised.

The 5th chapter of Joshua shows us that after all that the children of Israel have been through - up until now - they are now about to enter into the better that they have been promised.

Up until now they have..

- Wandering in the wilderness
- Received the tablets of stone known as the 10 Commandments
- Experienced the death of Moses
- Been given a new leader by the Lord's appointment: Joshua
- Were called to cross the Jordan River

And now it's time. The better that has been promised is just around the bend. But I noticed something in the reading of this 5th chapter. In Exodus, everyone was delivered at the same time - Everyone! But in Joshua, the same isn't true about everyone entering the Promised Land. There are a number of people who have disqualified themselves simply by because they were disobedient. (Look at Joshua 5:6)

*6 The Israelites had moved about in the wilderness forty years until all the men who were of military age when they left Egypt had died, since they had not obeyed the Lord. For the Lord had sworn to them that they would not see the land he had solemnly promised their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.*

Then verse 7 says that the Lord raised up their children, and they would be the ones who enter the Promised Land. But to do so would cost them. They would have to be circumcised before they could move on.

Joshua is instructed to make knives out of flint stones so that he can cut the foreskins of those who were not circumcised in Joshua 5:2. And Joshua 5:5 tells us why: everyone who were born while they were in the wilderness had not been circumcised. Some of these men could have very well have been 40 years old. After all, the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

Joshua makes knives out of flint stones. Now look at (Joshua 5:8) ..."when they were done circumcising everybody" ...Really?

Here's a whole generation that was never taught the importance of circumcision. And now they are being told it's required. ...And they line up to get cut!!? I'm intrigued, baffled and amazed by all of this, but particularly by a couple of things.

1. God told Joshua to make these knives out of stone and to circumcise this new generation. This is his assignment. He is instructed to do it. What task he has been given. He has to convince a generation of people who have never been taught the



importance of circumcision, that's now they have to be circumcised. God told Joshua to do this. Meaning if they were not circumcised it was on Joshua. He had to convince them of the importance of this symbolic identifier. And he had to do so after years of that same generation who saw nothing that really made them jump at the things of God. Wandering in the wilderness. All this talk of a Promised Land. Eating nothing but manna. They were raised during a period of a lot of talk of what is to come, and never seeing it. They were raised during a time when no one thought their relationship with God was important. Remember the covenant was the whole purpose of the circumcision. And they were to be circumcised eight days after they were born. But the bible says that this generation was not circumcised, which tells me that their parents didn't think that their children's relationship with God was important. And now after all these years, Joshua has to convince them that this is what they need to do. Wow! What an assignment.

2. Everyone in the new generation complied. They were willing to do whatever it took to be right with God. They actually show how important God is to them. Whatever wasn't shared with them; whatever wasn't taught to them - after all those years and after all that time, they let us know that they want both God and what God has for them. And they want it even if it doesn't come the easy way. They were not as entitled as one might assume, and even if they were God saw to it that they had to answer for themselves and not rely on their fore parents religion.

As difficult as all of this was, it apparently wasn't too difficult to keep it from getting done.

## I

Difficult is never an excuse! It's an experience.

The challenge of the assignment is not the issue and therefore should be never be used as an excuse to not do it. God gives the assignment because of the experience that comes from it. The difficulty associated with it is supposed to be experienced, for the experience becomes the unforgettable testimony - one that recalls the why, and the what needed to be done and the what that got done, and the how it got done.

This was a God ordained experience because there was generational exclusion. And now the Lord wanted to make sure that the excluded generation was the included generation. Get this: Because the promise was for them. We've got to do our part to see to it that the next generation is included, no matter how difficult the task. We must be determined to see to it that they get in!

## II

Sometimes it's better to be wounded than to wander: Wounds heal!

Now this is for the next generation. God says that they have to get cut. What a price that they have to pay for being excluded. Now in order to transition into what God has for them, they have to experience certain pain and/or discomfort. Their wounding is also

ordained, because God no longer wants them to wander - He wants them to have what He's promised them - that which is better.

Please be mindful of the fact, that wounds heal. And in this case they were necessary to get into the place of promise.

### III

#### The manna stops!

Once every one complied, the manna stopped. Sometimes the price that we pay, the sacrifice that we make is just so the manna will stop and more enjoyable will *be* experienced. You go from just making it on just enough to enjoying what you now have. God wants you and I to enjoy and not just endure. He wants the manna to stop - get this: and in the place the promise, the manna is no longer necessary because God now provides through the *promised* better

Don't fight what God is calling us to do  
Don't refuse what God is calling you to go through  
God wants you and I to go from making it on manna to enjoying the promise!

And the price will be worth it!

After all, this is what Jesus teaches us. Consider the price he paid, and today - you and I have got to say it was worth it. This is why we thank him for paying the price. The price he paid was so that we could have what God has promised!

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